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**BY**

**THEODORE HOOK.**

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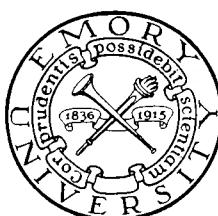
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# PEREGRINE BUNCE;

OR,

## SETTLED AT LAST.

A Novel.

BY

THEODORE HOOK,

AUTHOR OF "JACK BRAG," "COUSIN GEOFFREY,"

ETC. ETC.



LONDON:

G. ROUTLEDGE & CO. FARRINGDON STREET,  
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1857.



# PEREGRINE BUNCE;

OR,

## SETTLED AT LAST.

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### CHAPTER I.

If the reader, in the plenitude of his good-nature and imaginativeness, will fancy himself in a remarkably snug, well-warmed, thick-carpeted, red damask-curtained room, which would have been square had not one of its corners been cut off, or rather filled up, in order to afford space for an ample fireplace surmounted by a well-carved, oaken chimney-piece, in which fireplace a grate, fully stored with flaming coals topped by a brisk, dry, crackling log, gave out its heat and light, he will find himself (although invisible to them) in the society of two gentlemen—either a worthy in his way, as he may perhaps hereafter discover, but as opposite in character and attributes as he will see them in position, *vis-à-vis*, or rather toe to toe, on the hearth-rug; before which stands a table, whereon, sparkling like diamonds and rubies by the fire's light, appear divers and sundry bottles and glasses, in different degrees of fulness and emptiness, towering like the domes and minarets of a Mohammedan city, over heaps of walnut shells which had “discharged their cargoes,” and piles of grapes and pears, and other fruits, affording ample and concurring evidence that the season of the year in which our story opens was autumn.

The men, social and sociable as they were, exhibited, as has been already said, a striking contrast to each other: the one, an old uncle, sarcastic, blunt, odd, generally considered shrewd, and universally voted disagreeable; the other, a young nephew, whose chance of being his uncle's heir mainly depended, as he

and everybody else thought, upon his continuous and universal agreement in the views of his Mentor and present companion. The young one was accounted exceedingly cunning, what servants and retainers call “uncommon sharp,”—“not to be had,”—“up to everything,”—terms of laudation which those who bestow them perfectly appreciate, but of which, even if they had reached his ear, the uncle, with whom the reader finds him *tête-à-tête*, would have been about the last man in the world to admit the justice or truth.

“Peregrine,” said the old gentleman to the young one, “you are a fool.”

“Thank you,” said Peregrine.

“Ah,” replied his uncle, “that’s nonsense—why do you thank me for calling you a fool?—it’s an answer as bad as a *tu quoque*.”

“I’m sure I didn’t mean *that*,” said Peregrine.

“When I say you are a fool, Peregrine,” continued the old gentleman, “I do not mean that you are a fool in regard of the world; the world—as everybody calls the fifty people whom he happens to know personally—thinks you a deucedly clever fellow—I don’t; but no matter for that; no man is a prophet in his own country—still if there *are* people who puff, and praise, and toady you, still I say you are a fool—to yourself. Why don’t you marry?”

“Why, sir,” said Peregrine, “I don’t see how, in my circumstances, the thing is possible.”

“Pooh, pooh, don’t tell me,” interrupted the impatient old gentleman;—“as Buonaparte said, there is no such word as ‘impossible’ in *my* dictionary.”

“I can’t,” said Peregrine, “make up my mind to settle.”

“Oh, it’s your mind, is it?” said the uncle, with an exceedingly arch look, and an application of the forefinger of his white right hand to the side of his

“Nose, nose, jolly red nose.”

“On, it’s your mind, that’s all—well then, never mind your mind; that will cause you no great trouble, Peregrine,—you *have* a head, and so has a pin; but, by Jove! if you wait till you have made up a mind out of the materials for mind-making that Providence has assigned *you*, you will never marry or do anything else.

“Ah, sir,” said Peregrine, “that’s just the way—you think

worse of me than I think of myself—and I assure you that is saying a great deal."

"I think nothing about you," said the uncle, "except for your good—you know my principle—you know what I have always said—get a wife, Peregrine—you have a small patrimony—you have an uncle well off, *ecce signum* [saying which, the old gentleman tossed off a finely-proportioned glass of claret]—why not make yourself at once comfortable and respectable? I don't want you to throw yourself away upon a mere nobody—a thing with no more pence than petticoats; no—look out—look about—or, as they periodically bawl out at one of my clubs, 'look round'—see—choose—select, and pitch upon some nice, amiable creature, who reciprocates your affections, and then make yourself a home—a fireside; don't you see what I mean?"

"Yes, sir," said Peregrine; "I see here at this moment a fireside, and a very comfortable one, but still you preach not as you practise—you are not married."

"Me!" said the uncle,—"no; as the old joke says, I am like the finger-post, I point the road I cannot go—I am too old; when I was young, I was too poor, that's it, Peregrine; but you have money to a certain extent. I'm told everywhere but here you are a deucedly entertaining fellow—eh?—when you come to me, as the old joke goes, 'you hang your fiddle up with your hat in the hall.'"

"Sir," said Peregrine, "I am not conscious of any difference in my conduct or conversation when I am here or anywhere else."

"I believe you," said the uncle; "cheerfulness, mirth, and what is called conviviality, to be truly agreeable, must grow out of the circumstances of the moment. Quite unconscious of the cause when in a give-and-take and appreciating society, you find your spirits rise, your heart warm, your mind—if you have one—expand, and your tongue begin to wag; but with me, *tête-à-tête*, how should you be excited, your talent be roused, your imagination brightened—premising, as I before said, that you have any? A man may as well try to be witty or merry, on compulsion, as to be either without a seasonable provocation; I dare say, Peregrine, you *are* a very funny fellow when you like."

The words "funny fellow" did by no means assort with the ideas which Mr. Peregrine Bunce entertained of himself, and he could not help at the moment wishing that his uncle had only been at divers and sundry parties wherein Peregrine had been

encircled by listening ladies, anxious to catch a *bon-mot* or a *jeu-d'esprit* from his lips.—Funny fellow, indeed!

“I am not aware of any peculiar absurdity in my conduct,” said Peregrine; “I am in what you call the give-and-take line, play my part in society, and am not particularly remarkable for making myself ridiculous.”

“No,” said Oliver Bunce (so was the uncle called),—“no—I dare say not particularly—but when a bungler turns joker, it is something like the ‘jackass playing lapdog,’ as the old fable has it.”

“But, sir,” said Peregrine, “what is the immediate object—the particularly urgent reason which induces you to press a matrimonial undertaking at this particular moment?”

“I have no particular individual to point out, if you mean that,” said Oliver; “but time wears on, and man wears out, and if you put off the experiment of popping the question to somebody much longer, it may fail;—it *was* so with me—dilly dally—shilly shally—until, when I was in a position to act, I was certain to be refused; so I gave it up, and here I am.”

“Well, and, my dear uncle,” said Peregrine, “I can’t well imagine any man more comfortably planted.”

“You are wrong, Peregrine,” said the uncle. “Without a woman who loves and esteems you, and whom you esteem and love, life is a blank—home a desert. I drink my wine, I crack my nuts, and now and then my jokes; but when I come back from any journey of business or pleasure, who meets me and greets me at the door?—Servants who care no more for me than they did for their last master, nor than they will for their next. There’s no welcome, no solicitude, no joy; then, if I’m ill, whom have I to pity me, or tend me?—If I am pleased, whom have I to share my pleasure?—If I am vexed, whom have I to condole with me? No, no; marry, Peregrine,—marry, if you are wise.”

“But,” said Peregrine, “there is in a bachelor’s life an independence arising from —”

“From having nothing to depend upon, as the old joke goes,” said Oliver. “Just see how a bachelor is treated. If he goes to a country-house, he is poked into a little bandbox of a bedroom, with a smoky chimney, or perhaps no chimney at all—what does it matter? he’s a bachelor; hoisted outside of a carriage on a wet night; sent to hunt for shawls and cloaks, after a ball; and bound to stand up in a supper-room, fetching and carrying for some woman for whom he don’t care a fig—

because he is a bachelor. Pshaw! a portmanteau leads a better life."

"I admit the principle," said Peregrine, "but mine is a question as to time."

"So is mine," said Oliver. "Every day brings me nearer my grave, by four-and-twenty hours. I'm getting on—going down the hill fast—and I should like to see you settled before I leave the world; so think about it."

Now, to be candid with the reader, Peregrine *had* thought about it; but Peregrine, as he fancied, and indeed his friends believed, was blessed with that very extraordinary natural gift, "an old head upon young shoulders;" and although he was a great admirer of beauty and accomplishments, he had an eye to the main chance, and relished no part of his uncle's anti-Malthusian lecture more than that in which he expressed his anxiety that he should not, as Mrs. Peachum says, or rather sings,

"Throw himself away."

Peregrine had—as every man has—certain peculiarities in his taste touching female attractions, which affected the character and qualities of the lady more immediately and particularly than her abilities or education.—Simplicity of manner, mildness, and modesty of behaviour, were the winning points in his estimation; the shrinking diffidence which heaves the tucker and tints the pallid cheek with "roseate hue," was, in his estimation, the *acmē* of perfection; while he recoiled from the gay and lively conduct and conversation of the finished belle or well-read blue.

After the dialogue, however, which we have just quoted, Peregrine, seeing much reason in his uncle's solicitude for his establishment, began to think seriously of the cold-pudding system which was to settle his love, and resolved accordingly to look about him without further delay. Nor indeed did he permit the *sederunt* of the evening in question to break up without promising his most respectable relation that no time should be lost in commencing operations—bearing always in his memory that he was to do nothing rash, but, in his marriage, to make a match as well as a pair.

## CHAPTER II.

WHAT the respectable Mr. Oliver Bunce has said about being witty on compulsion, holds good as regards matrimonial speculations. No man can be in love at the word of command—nor woman neither. Indeed, the compulsory order serves as an extinguisher even to a growing flame; and as to exciting the smallest spark of what an Irish gentleman might call the *tinder* passion, by what Oliver Bunce would, “as the old joke says,” call the approach of a “match,” the thing is impossible; and although, after the evening’s discussion, and the forcible manner in which old Noll had put the necessity for a speedy determination, it seemed almost an imposed duty, the difficulty resolved itself back again into the old “impossibility,” because, as it appeared, no opportunity occurred for the “forwardation” (which appears quite as good an English word as the “backwardation” of the Stock Exchange) of Peregrine’s project.

The reader, however, is not to suppose that Peregrine had always been so dilatory in the particular line to which his excellent and exemplary uncle wished particularly to draw his attention upon this special occasion; on the contrary, Peregrine’s head was unquestionably distinguished under the *Lampedo* system of the great Professor Deville, as being very much inflicted with huge bumps of amativeness, which might have been mistaken by the unskilful in such mysteries for wens; and perhaps it may hereafter appear that the phrenologists (as they call themselves) even in his case would have found their calculations more correct than they did when they gave the head of a man who had murdered his wife and five children, a decided character for mildness and humanity, because he did not consummate his atrocities by butchering the sixth baby in the cradle; or gravely lectured upon a cast sent them from Norfolk, professing to have been taken from a respectable gentleman’s skull at Berghampton, in that county, but which, in point of fact, was derived from an oddly shaped turnip dug up in one of his fields.

Peregrine, mild as he appeared in the three-cornered parlour, was, or rather *had* been, a gay deceiver; and therefore was, as we have already seen, anxious to do precisely what uncle Noll advised; but the difficulty was, to “get the steam up” at the required moment, and to fall in love *impromptu*. It was not for

want of susceptibility, poor fellow ; for there was a story upon record, in his own private annals, which fully corroborated the power of his sensibility, and which somehow had entangled him in an affair—no one exactly knew the extent or nature of its obligations—with a young lady whose name never passed his lips, but who unquestionably had somehow acquired a strong, if not permanent, claim upon his gratitude and affection. This was Peregrine's mystery ; but the habit of not caring for it had rendered him callous, and, after the lively provocation of his uncle, he was perfectly ready for a new start.

Every county in England has its peculiar families, exactly as the aborigines of later discovered countries have their tribes. The Grimgros of Cheshire know no more of the Appleswags of Somersetshire, than the Quoskebuts of Patarapoo do of the Illimangunerries of Citamatam ; but there is always a county chain, and if any one family happens not to be a link in it, there is an end of everything. Twenty, nay, thirty, miles are traversed through bad roads and dark nights to uphold this county compact, especially if there happens to be a bolt of aristocracy in the concatenation ; and even hating one another cordially, the families meet at all convenient or inconvenient opportunities, to maintain a bond of union against the invasion of foreign intruders.

Peregrine, who had quite got over his *affaire de cœur*—how, let the scandal-mongers settle amongst themselves,—thought—considered—reflected—calculated and recalculated, as to where he could begin his matrimonial campaign ; although it would be doing Peregrine no very great injustice to say, that he thought that to begin, was to achieve. He was quite of the “*Veni, vidi, vici*” school, as regarded the “young women ;” into which impudent assumption he certainly had been practically flattered by at least the one “unfortunate” young lady, whom, under some strange circumstances, he had left to her fate.

Casting about him, he beheld in his half-sleeping vision the Botherleys of Doodlebow, the Gawkeys of Straddledale, the Snigglebottoms of Slugmere—all of the right order of people, magnates, and in their sphere and degree jealous of their rights, and tetchy about precedence as the wife of a member of council at Calcutta, where, by the way, the imaginary advantages of temporary and unreal rank are more tenaciously upheld than in the court of a legitimate sovereign, in which the place is genuine and permanent ; but still he could not settle, or rather could not conclude, as to where he was to begin to “hover ;” for Pere-

rine would scarcely prize a heart that another could easily win. The fact is, Peregrine had notions, probably peculiar to himself, but he knew at a glance what, as regarded the fairer portion of society, was good and amiable ; he was strongly and devotionally affected towards softness, sweetness, and simplicity—one hoydenish trick, one misplaced giggle, one questionable observation partaking of a *double entente*, would flutter all the loves in his dovecot of a heart, and leave him gazing on the beautiful object of his affections with a remorseful feeling of regret, such as one might suppose the director of a fire-office to cast upon the ruins of a splendid and deeply-insured building, the morning after it had been burned down.

However, uncle Noll was to be obeyed, and Peregrine resolved to make a visit to an exceedingly nice family, of whom he knew but little as yet—but which consisted of a father, mother, and two daughters—that they were co-heiresses there was no question—that they were quite pretty enough to play their parts in the world, no doubt ; and the only difficulty Peregrine felt at setting to work upon the heart of one of them, was the choice—whether Margaret or Dorothea should be the victim. Dorothea being dark—Margaret being fair—both apparently good-natured, and, as he thought, likely to suit his taste and principles.

At breakfast the aspirant hinted to his uncle that perhaps the Mintons would be agreeable acquaintances to make. Oliver understood in a moment what his prudent nephew meant, and rejoiced excessively to find him so ready and willing to follow the advice which he had proffered the night before.

"Very nice people indeed, Peregrine," said Oliver, "very—I have seen them at church—could scarcely keep my eyes off of them—as the old joke goes, could not listen to the divine, for looking at the divinity. The dark one is my beauty, eh?—coal-black eyes—coal-black hair—skin like snow—eh?"

"They are both handsome," said Peregrine, "either in her way. But beauty is not my aim or object."

"No, no," said Noll ; "'handsome is as handsome does,' says one old story ; and 'not what is she? but what has she?' says another. Eh—you dog—I'll trust you—long-headed, clear-sighted, though you *have* no mind—you know what's what, as the joke goes, and I know that these girls have five-and-twenty thousand pounds a-piece, down—pity you can't marry both—ch? Bigamy and polygamy—not the fashion here—do it in Turkey—so did Solomon—very odd—never could imagine either the principle or the practice—what?"

"If I could once fancy myself beloved by one charming, dear, ingenuous woman," said Peregrine, "I should be the happiest of men; and really the view you gave me by anticipation, last night, of the comforts of a connubial life, has made me most anxious to settle."

"With all your property in a ring-fence, as the old joke goes," said Oliver. "The ring the emblem of love which has no end—eh? Peregrine—bad joke t'other side of one's mouth—for *that* which has no end has no beginning. What—"

"I am no advocate for love at first sight," said Peregrine. "I quite discard the 'full-grown Adam' school of affection—my object would be to study the mind and qualities of the fair creature to whom I devoted myself, and to trace in her performance of the duties of a daughter and sister, the blissful anticipation of her future conduct as a wife."

"Right, Peregrine, right," said Noll; "there's nothing like seeing them at home—eh?—all in the rough, as I say, about the domestic duties and household occupations. I don't mean pie-making and pudding-making, when, as used to be the case some half century ago, Angelina Sophia would greet you with the paste sticking round her finger-nails."

"I quite sympathize with you, sir," said Peregrine, "and having turned the matter over in my mind, and mentioned my ideas on the subject to you, I shall go and make a visit to the MINTONS to-day."

"Do, do," said Noll, "and give my best compliments to them. I don't know much of them, but the little I know, I like: he was a merchant—rich and well to do—so much I *do* know; tell them how happy I shall be, if they like bachelors' fare, to see them here—make up a party for them. What!—do, do—and success attend you—but the black-eyed one is the one to take—rely upon that!"

"I prefer a blonde to a brunette," said Peregrine.

"I don't exactly know them by those fine names," said the uncle, "but the fair ones are all sly—quiet and sly—eh?—don't you see?—and so uncommon—eh? Bless their little hearts, black, brown, or whatever colour they may be, they are all charming: tell them to come—and I'll make them welcome."

The contrast—or rather the curious mystification which produced that which appeared a contrast—between Peregrine and his uncle was very striking. Oliver Bunce had a notion that Peregrine was—as to a certain extent he really was—exceedingly *shy*, and would never make his way with the "woman creatures;"

whereas Peregrine's shyness was by no means unprepossessing, inasmuch as it passed for that which goes far to win a well-bred woman ; a respectful deference, which, when he once felt that he liked and esteemed those with whom he was living, wore off—the chilling mist in which at the outset he appeared to be enveloped was dissipated as he warmed in society ; while his excessive devotion to what he was pleased to call “the fair sex,” was never in the slightest degree diminished by his own secret good opinion of himself in the art of gaining their hearts and affections. Oliver, on the other hand, who talks of all his worldly happiness as past, as mere matter of history, and a theme of perpetual retrospection and regret, was, in point of fact, infinitely more sprightly in little affairs of gallantry than his nephew, who, at *his* age, regarded his uncle, in his gout, as a talkative old gentleman, with one foot in a flannel stocking and the other in the grave.

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### CHAPTER III.

Now, of these Mintons the reader ought to know something before Peregrine's visit. Minton was, as old Noll has told us, a retired merchant from London, and although certainly not

“—a native, and to the manor born,”

a man exceedingly respected and esteemed in his very genteel retreat. He was in the commission of the peace, and had been strongly urged by his wife and daughters, ever since the uniform of the deputy-lieutenants was decorated, adorned, and illustrated with silver epaulettes, to endeavour to procure that most honourable office.

Minton cared not for epaulettes,—being a justice was quite enough for him, and for all his acquaintance ; for the whole of his after-dinner conversation was made up of a running report of the proceedings of the tribunal of which he was one of the judges, and to whom, day by day, the rights and liberties of the subject are being gradually confided, by the agreeable and convenient process of abolishing, or at least superseding, that which in less liberal days than ours has always been reckoned the palladium of the constitution,—the trial by jury.

Anybody who heard Mr. Minton converse judicially, and lay down the law according to his own particular individual notion, in his own house, where nobody could with decency stop his oratory, might have easily appreciated the advantages derivable from the decision of one such man as affecting the liberty of the subject, not to speak of treadmilling, private-whipping, and the silent-system, in preference to the impartial judgment of twelve ordinary men, all unbiassed and unprejudiced with regard to the criminal or his offence ; the Solon of the bench under the new system being perhaps at once the accuser, the judge, the sentencer, and by deputy the executioner.

Legislation probably is to follow the “go-ahead” principle, universally adopted in all other matters, and justice to be administered as travelling is performed on railroads,—upon which innocent men, women, and children are killed, maimed, and mutilated day after day, although, as the reports tell us, “no blame whatever can be attributed to anybody concerned in the establishment.”

Minton was a powerful, pock-frecken man, with a loud, harsh voice, and who, to borrow a couplet from old Oliver Bunce’s diary,

“Looked like a crumpet,  
And spoke like a trumpet :”

he was dictatorial and noisy, but exceedingly good-natured, made a point of being unquestionably well-versed in parish matters, of course attended church regularly, and read the responses louder than the clerk ; and the Miss Mintons having conscientiously taught the little girls and boys of the village schools to sing gloriously out of tune, Minton, for the sake of their reputation, used to (what he called) lead them in the psalms, standing erect in his pew, with his great eyes fixed upon the quivering quavering children in the gallery, giving the time with his uplifted hand more energetically than ever did Sir George Smart himself, with the baton of conductor, which he so deservedly received from his professional brethren.

Service over, Minton and his daughters took their stand in the churchyard ; everybody came fresh from their piety, imbued, as it is to be hoped, with all the feelings which the service and the sermon had inspired, bobbing and curtseying round him, who standing bolt upright, maypole-wise, condescended to give every delicate worshipper of his merits and virtues who approached, a

friendly shake of the hand, the palm of which was like oak plank and the fingers like nut-crackers.

And then to hear him make his inquiries, in a stentorian voice, of the different sufferers in the neighbourhood, "it would have melted a heart of stone."—"Dawes, you got that soup and the flannel Mrs. Minton sent you?"

"Yes, sir."

"How's your wife?"

"Very bad, indeed, sir, thank you."

"I've desired Dr. Pips to call on her to-morrow."

"Thank you, sir," says the man.

"Jenkins, is your girl's leg better?"

"Yes, sir," says Jenkins; "obliged to you, sir."

"Did Mrs. Minton's plaster do it good?" says Minton.

"I don't know, sir," says Jenkins.

And so went on this trumpeting for at least half an hour, to the exaltation of Mr. Minton's piety and charity; and the virtue and excellence of Mrs. Minton and the two co-heiresses were consequently very popular, excepting only amongst the poor people so called up and catechized, who seemed to have a shrewder guess at the cause of all these ostentatious displays than the neighbours, who, not having any need of the benevolence of the Minton family, did not feel themselves outraged by the display of the disposition of a gentleman who certainly was not one of those who

"Do good by stealth, and blush to find it fame."

Mrs. Minton was an invalid of the first water. What she had been—I do not mean to disparage the excellency of her moral character, and therefore I had better say who she had been—was not altogether ascertainable; but there could be no doubt that the course of her education had brought her to a state in which, as far as concerned her conversation, "the least said was soonest mended." In fact, her desperate, continued, and never-intermittend indisposition arose from the absolute impossibility of her "carrying on," as the sailors say, "in society."

Minton, who was exceedingly high and mighty in all his proceedings, erected into importance, as he was, on a substantial pedestal of money-bags, could not endure the risk of any of his wife's mistakes and blunders, and would, I believe, with all his public piety and domestic excellency, have felt not exceedingly ill-pleased if any good-natured friend would have smothered his better half.

This sounds harsh—perhaps his historian may err; but the truth to which we can most unquestionably attain is, that he married at a period of his career when canvas sleeves and an apron formed the leading characteristics of his official costume, and when, as it was generally believed, he diverted himself in his leisure moments by carrying out parcels, varying that wholesome exercise by occasionally wheeling a well-loaded truck through the streets of his native city.

Faithful and affectionate she had been to him through their lives, the early hardships of which she had shared with him, and mitigated by a care and industry which rivalled those of Mrs. Pepys, who burnt her hand in broiling the leg of a turkey for the future Secretary of the Admiralty, and to whom her excellent husband, if his original diary may be trusted, continued grateful to the very last, notwithstanding the blandishments of Mrs. Mercer, and the attractions of my Lady Castlemaine.

Minton's affections had not been estranged from his wife by any other or newer object,—he was not calculated for estrangement of that kind; of taste or sentiment he did not possess so much as one of his own coach-horses, and besides, like Pepys, he treasured up all her early anxiety and activity for her advantage in his outset,—but, nevertheless, all his natural feelings and just recollections were overlaid and stifled by the obstacles which he thought and felt that her homeliness of manner and inelegance of language interposed to the unrestricted association of himself and his daughters with the class of society in which it was his object to “move,” as the phrase goes.

Now—truth to be told—Mrs. Minton was, to a certain extent, conscious of her own imperfections; and the gradations of refinement in the family have often been a subject for remark and amusement amongst those who had “the pleasure of their acquaintance.” In going to a party, so long as Mrs. Minton insisted upon being well enough to go—with the eldest girl—before the *blonde* was out—Mr. Minton would say to Mrs. Minton, “Now, my dear love, do mind what you are about tonight; don't come out with any of your nonsense.” Mrs. Minton received the admonition kindly; and then a consent-giving silence followed, and Minton glorified in his triumph.

“And, dear papa,” said Dorothea, a minute or two after, “do mind and don't swear so—it is so vulgar in company.”

Minton made a sort of croaking, cackling noise, assenting to the caution of his highly-accomplished daughter, but not without thinking how rapidly the youthful *aspirantes* rise on the

ladder which their careful parents have placed for them, or perhaps of the hen who, having hatched the ducklings, sees them swim easily, actively, and happily, in an element on which the mother of the brood dare not herself venture.

Mrs. Minton, during the "invalidism" into which her husband, aided by a friendly and accommodating physician, had persuaded her, had been recommended the use of a now almost exploded consolation, in the shape of camphorated julep, which, in order to prevent any unpleasant results, was ordinarily exhibited coevally and contemporaneously with cold brandy-and-water, probably the most dangerous imaginable adjunct to anything in the world.

Minton, who, as we have already shown, was no Chesterfield himself, had mixed sufficiently with the world, in its various phases, to make him, with a little caution, passable enough as a retired merchant;—with an independent fortune and a comfortable establishment, very little is wanting to make the world bear with more than patience the quaintnesses and oddities of their possessor, by whom they have been acquired;—his habitual solecisms and unconquerable vulgarities pass with his well-pleased guests for so many *piquant* drolleries or nicely-disguised playfulnesses; while his curious opinions and avowals, wholly at variance with *bien-séance* or popular taste, are treated as the amusing eccentricities of an extremely shrewd and clever man.

Mrs. Minton's performances in the same line were, however, too broad, too palpable, and too obvious, to enable the ladies of the neighbourhood—or of the county, as *he* would have said—and with whom it was his great object to associate, to give her, as judges of female society, the benefit of any doubt favourable to the essentiality of her coarseness; the consequence was, as the scandal of the neighbourhood went, that as Mrs. Minton's addiction to the camphor julep and its concomitant habitually increased, and when her daughters grew up and became old enough to do the honours, Mr. Minton always contrived, when any party was expected, to administer to his better—or, as the ungrateful merchant would perhaps have said, his bitter—half, on the preceding evening, or sometimes at luncheon on the day itself, a cheering cordial tonic—to her irresistible—compounded, after his prescription and her taste, of certain liquors which, however innocuous in their ulterior results, were of a nature to produce a temporary indisposition sufficiently important to confine her to her room during the period of the proposed festivity, and to render her—in her own words, thus unconsciously delivered as an excuse for her non-appearance

—“a wretched invalid; scarce able to stand, and not fit to be seen.”

It was said, I recollect, at the time, that Mr. Minton justified this apparently unfeeling and barbarous course of proceeding upon two grounds: first, upon his anxiety to maintain the respectability of his family; and secondly, because if he had not by a *douce violence* induced his lady to make herself just sufficiently unwell to save his reputation, she would at and after dinner have not only ruined it, but have made herself much worse into the bargain.

Harsh, hard, and uncouth as Mr. Minton was, his was the family on which Peregrine first meant to make his hawk-like descent, in order to pounce upon, and carry off, one of his sweet chickens, who, by the way, were not what the world considers exactly in a chickenary light. His choice was an odd one, but he had heard that the girls were not quite comfortable at home, or, if they were, that they had been comfortable there as long as they wished to be; and, therefore, coupling the proximity of their residence to that of his uncle, with something of a knowledge of their little private histories, he fancied he could, by making one of them happy, secure happiness to himself, with, perhaps, five-and-twenty or thirty thousand pounds into the bargain.

There is something in a consciousness of one's intentions and designs, which somehow mars a man's exertions; and the feeling that Peregrine came into the family with affection and love pre-pense and aforethought, paralysed his efforts to make himself as amiable or *aimable* as usual; indeed, one of the great points of his embarrassment was the decision between the claims of the young ladies to his particular attentions.

It was generally understood that their fortunes were the same; the difference in their ages was fourteen months. Dorothy, as we have already said, was dark—Margaret was fair. Dorothy was lively and laughing—Margaret serious and sentimental. Dorothy said everything she thought, and without waiting for the best words to express herself—Margaret spoke little, and her soft, downcast blue-grey eyes seemed to court the encouragement which her boisterous sister's sparkling black ones appeared to give.

In the days of homeliness when these fair creatures were christened, the one was ordinarily called Dolly, and the other Peggy; but as fortune smiled, and the paternal wealth increased, the coarseness of these appellations gave way to more euphonic sounds, and the elder young lady became “Dory,” while her sister was “Margy.” They were, dear things, constantly and

perpetually engaged in a sort of playful warfare, which, even if they did not intend it should be so, was remarkably agreeable to their acquaintance, especially to the "he-creatures," as Dory called them. They snubbed each other for faults and follies which perhaps nobody else would have found out, or even thought about, if they had not, in the plenitude of their playfulness, attracted the attention of the circle to them. Thus, Dory would call Margy a prude, and a "pernickity" thing, doomed and destined to die an old maid; while Margy would proclaim her sister a flirt and a coquet,—none of which, however true in point of fact, they ever meant to be seriously believed.

Margy, however, was the object of Peregrine's solicitude, as soon as he had obtained sufficient footing in the family to cast about in sober earnestness for a help-meet: pale, delicate, diffident, and seemingly sorrowful, she excited something like pity, and that pity something "much akin to" love, by the sweet gentleness with which she bore so mildly and meekly the attacks of her volatile, voluble sister. And then she was so good—"Pretension to piety is odious," thought Peregrine; "but to see this humble-hearted, fair creature betake herself silently, alone, and unostentatiously, to the infant schools, to the establishment of which she has herself largely contributed, is delightful." There were no gilt letters emblazoned on panels in front of the church gallery, announcing that she had subscribed so much towards beautifying the edifice, by whitewashing its venerable walls, and gilding and painting the beautiful relics of antiquity, whose very dirt gave them additional value. No county paper proclaimed that Miss Margaret Minton had added largely to the funds of its benevolent and philanthropic institution. No—she was, in fact, an exceedingly interesting and attaching girl—she saw, moreover, that Peregrine thought so; indeed, as his objects were serious, and his intentions real, he took no very great trouble to conceal the real feelings which she had excited—what *she* thought, of course, remains to be developed. To a being like Margaret Minton, time was essentially necessary for the consideration of the character and qualities of a man whose object in perpetually visiting at the house, coupled with what the cockneys call "the delicate attentions" which he paid her, could scarcely be mistaken.

Peregrine was of the chameleon order of human beings: without much character of his own, but with the organ of self-preservation strongly developed, he was not an unskilful professor of the art of accommodating himself to the views,

manners, habits, and opinions of those with whom he associated, and whose sympathies it was his object to engage : he took the colour of surrounding objects most readily, and fell so completely into Margaret's system of early education and pious training-up, that he would beg to be permitted to escort her to the schools, in preference to going on any gayer pursuit which might be proposed by Minton or his elder daughter.

Margaret occasionally permitted this display of sanctimonious gallantry to a certain extent—the door of the school-house, however, was the barrier ; there she parted from her friend—she feared he was not yet good enough to pass the threshold, and entreated him to leave her to the performance of those duties which religion and conviction had induced her to impose upon herself.

“ What a wife she will make ! ” said Peregrine ; “ how amiable, how gentle, and how good ! I wish—I wish—devoutly wish that I could with decency ascertain what her fortune really is. How delightful it would be to encourage and strengthen her in these habits and principles ! Common report is not always to be relied upon—scarcely ever—if she *have* five-and-twenty thousand pounds, what could I do better ? —uncle Noll will be delighted, and all will go well. I shall not only be a richer, but a better man than I ever hoped or expected to be.”

And so he prudently and almost piously soliloquized,—his thoughts nearly equally divided, according to his worthy uncle’s apophthegm, in the contemplation and consideration of what she was, and what she had.

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## CHAPTER IV

“ WELL now, Margy,” said the lively Dory to her tender sister, “ what do you really think of him ? ”

“ Him ? ” asked Margy, scarcely lifting her eyes from her work—for she was an indefatigable constructor of what Oliver Bunce would have called he-mises and she-mises for the rising generation—“ what do you mean by *him*, dear Dory ? ”

“ What should I mean ? ” replied the sparkling sister ; “ why, by *him* I mean your devoted swain, Peregrine.”

“ Swain ! ” echoed Margy,—“ I really have not the smallest idea of what you mean.”

"Poor innocent!" said Miss Minton; "this is always the way with you quiet, unassuming, exceedingly good young ladies; why, you know, Margy, as well that he is over head and ears in love with you, as you know—"

"That Captain M'Larrup is mad for you," interrupted Margy.

"Well, what then?" said Dory; "I know he is in love with me, and I like it; it is exceedingly agreeable to be loved, and he is quite a man after my heart—tall, good-looking, and good-natured; laughs louder than papa, tells wonderful stories about himself, and plays upon the key-bugle like an angel."

"My dear Dory," said Margy, with a look of immeasurable horror, "how you permit yourself to talk!—praise the captain, if you like,—praise his person and his accomplishments, but the idea of playing upon the key-bugle like an angel!"

"Well, well," said Dory; "there, I know that was wrong, and I won't say it again—only he plays on it beautifully. I don't mean any harm by what I say; my notion is, and I speak for myself, that every woman has in her head a thousand odd whims and droll fancies; and if she keep them all to herself, they may turn to mischief, but if she lets a few of them out, off-hand as they occur, it is much better for her in the end. I look upon my tongue as a sort of safety-valve to my mind, and use it accordingly."

"But, dearest girl," said Margy, "if you would but regulate your mind, discipline it, keep it in order, and occupy it with thoughts and considerations of a higher order and better character, you would have no occasion for any such mechanical correction."

"Don't preach, Margy," said Dory; "I know you are a most excellent person, and do a vast deal of service to our poor neighbours. As for myself, I certainly have no taste for carrying about water-gruel and looking at sore legs; so I delegate either my maid or Mr. Fleam—the very *beau idéal* of apothecaries—to minister to the wants and alleviate the sufferings of my pets: my belief is, that the poor creatures themselves like it better; nothing annoys a poor person so much as a visit from a rich one—it puts them out, worries them, disarranges them—and moreover is injurious, because half the time which a wife or a daughter might devote to attendance on the patient is taken up in scrubbing, and dusting, and washing their 'place,' as they call it, to make it look neat and tidy, and so, at a vast inconvenience to themselves, get the dear young lady's praise for cleanliness and industry."

"Upon these subjects we cannot agree," said the gentle Mar-

garet: "such matters depend more upon feeling than taste: I do not mean to say that there is any positive gratification or amusement in visiting sick-rooms or small cottages, but there is a satisfaction arising from doing a duty, which in itself produces pleasure of a much higher character than any derivable from the mere common-place gaieties of society."

"I like doing things on a greater scale," said Dory; "I like the excitement of a bazaar or a fancy ball—I would work night and day to furnish a stall, and play off all my best airs and graces to get customers for my stock, and glory in finding myself the largest contributor to the charity. In the same way, at a fancy-ball one has gaiety mingling with goodness, and the delight of the dance is charming, enhanced by the reflection that while we are pleasing ourselves we are benefiting others."

"All wrong, Dory dear," said Margaret. "As to the delights of dancing, I cannot discuss them, because never dancing myself I do not appreciate them; but the bazaar is idle nonsense. You buy materials of tradesmen who need no sympathy; you make them up at a vast deal of useless trouble; and you sell them, to the unquestionable injury of an honest hard-working class of our fellow-creatures, who make them much better, and exist by selling them much cheaper; and then, in order to force from the pockets of thoughtless people, who have not a spark of charity in their composition, the price of the theatrical exhibition of what you call your 'airs and graces,' you assume a character, which, if it were real, would be injured and destroyed by the very trickeries which for charity's sake you think it becoming to 'play off.' "

"Well, but, my dear girl," replied Dory, "if it is to do good—"

"Ay," interrupted her sister; "you believe, I suppose, that the end justifies the means; that does not hold good in all cases, does it?"

"Why, that I don't know, dear," said Dory; "but this I do know, that I think the means you are taking with your pet schools here will not be justified in the end. There you go every day, stiving yourself up in a hot room full of dirty brats bawling out all the common-place sayings of life to psalm tunes, singing the most solemn words to the most vulgar airs, and rehearsing to music the ordinary tasks of eating, drinking, and washing themselves."

"The end there," said Margaret, "will surely justify the means. There I am in my glory—the prospect that opens to my view there is most cheering, and I feel ten times happier

within those humble white-washed walls, than in the finest saloons of our aristocratic neighbours."

"Well," answered Dory, "I confess, if education is so essential to those young folks, I should content myself with engaging competent teachers, and occasionally having the pupils examined by some equally competent person, who might judge of their progress, and report upon it, but—"

"If education be essential," said Margaret, looking alarmed, "if!—why, what upon earth would they do without it?"

"Much the same, my dear," said Dory, "as they did in the times of our Edwards and Henrys, and the glorious days of your favourite Queen Bess."

"Those were days of mental blindness," said Margaret.

"Yes, ignorance, perfect ignorance," said Dory; "poor Shakspeare, for instance, and a few more."

"Shakspeare!" said Margaret; "I am speaking of things far different from plays, Dory, or players; it is not for the perusal of such books that I delight in educating the children of my schools."

"Perhaps not, Margy," said the sister, "and if you could confine the children of your schools to a course of pious and moral reading, it would be all exceedingly well; but by curing what you call the mental blindness of the olden times, you are opening their eyes and their minds to a thirst after knowledge which never can be of the slightest use to them, not to speak of the insidious attacks of the traitor and the infidel."

"I think," said Margaret, "disciplined as *they* are, their minds will be proof against any such attacks."

"Well, but," said Dory, "discipline their minds as you will—teach them to read nothing but good books if you can,—having done this, who in another half-century will make your shoes, or your bread, or milk your cows, or mow your grass, or till your land, or cut your corn?"

"My dear girl," said Margaret, "we waste our time in these discussions; you never will talk me out of what I think my duty—you ought to have been a papist."

"What's that noise?" said Dory, startled by a rustling amongst the trees, in which the summer-house, where they were sitting, was embosomed.

"Only *me*," said Peregrine, coming forth from his hiding-place. "I heard you arguing very learnedly, and with a certain degree of animation, and I did not like to break in upon such a discussion, so I paused and became an auditor."

"That is excessively rude, Mr. Bunce," said Dory, laughing.

"I give you my honour," said Peregrine, "if the dialogue had taken anything of a personal character, I should have discovered myself before ; as it is, I have heard only that which it was most agreeable to hear ;" saying which, he cast upon the mild, placid countenance of the gentle Margaret, one of those looks which in the course of his small practice he had uniformly found exceedingly effective. Margy was conscious of the peculiarity of its expression, and blushed. Dory saw the proceeding, held down her face, and smiled.

There is no doubt that Mr. Peregrine Bunce was hit particularly hard by the unprepared, spontaneous, and inartificial disclosure of Margaret's goodness, made in confidence to a fond sister, without the slightest idea of display or effect. His eyes wandered not from the fair object of his admiration, and, recurring to the subject of her favourite schools, he begged to be permitted to accompany her on her next visit, and to be allowed the privilege of the *entrée* which she had hitherto denied him.

"No," said Margaret, "not yet ; you are not good enough, Mr. Bunce : there is something in your look and manner that induces me to believe that although you give in to my ways, you are laughing at me in your sleeve. I require a longer novitiate from my adherents than you have yet served."

"To be thought worthy of your approbation, Miss Margaret," said Peregrine, "years of trial would be well spent."

"I think I had better go in," said Dory, "and see what o'clock it is."

"Dory, love," said Margaret, "where are you going ?"

"To leave you and Mr. Bunce to your confessions, my dear," said Dory ; "I am not half good enough for such exceedingly good society."

"Did you ever hear such a girl ?" said Margy, appealing to Mr. Bunce, who appeared more amiable in her eyes than he ever had before ; "why are you not good enough ?—there is not a better creature upon earth."

"Yes, but I think I hear the captain's key-bugle," said Dory, "and as he plays lively tunes, it would not perhaps be proper to let him come this way, to disturb your serious thoughts."

Saying which, Dory gathered up her work and ran off in the direction of the house, leaving Bunce and Margy in what might be called a delicate dilemma.

"Well," said Margy, "I must go after her, or—"

"Nay, nay," whispered Peregrine, "stop one moment; tell me—tell me seriously when may I go with you to these schools: it will be my delight and pride to aid you in the charming task of educating these interesting children; how can my hours be better passed than in uniting with you in so laudable a pursuit?"

"I am delighted," said Margaret, "to hear such words from your lips, Mr. Bunce. I have, since your more frequent visits here, heard others pass them, which have grated harshly upon my ears, and pained my heart—words of levity—and, more than once, an oath—now—"

"Oh!" interrupted Bunce, gazing on the fair girl with delight, "what happiness do you confer on me by confessing an interest in my welfare. By Heavens!—"

"Mr. Bunce," interrupted (in *her* turn) Miss Minton, "another oath—and that too at the moment of my just reproof!"

"Yes," said Peregrine, "but this is an oath in seriousness—in solemn seriousness; let me but be honoured—blessed by your encouraging care, by your soothing and cheering advice; make me a participator in those feelings and principles, the avowal of which has this morning inspired me with respect and admiration—make me, in fact, worthy to be your companion, and —"

"— friend, Mr. Bunce," said Margaret, gently pushing away the gentleman's right hand, which was evidently on a voyage towards hers; "nothing will give me more pleasure than to conduce, in any degree, however humble, to benefiting your interests, or leading your mind into a right path—"'

"Angel!" muttered Peregrine.

Margaret, happily for him, did not hear the gentle exclamation.

"After all, what guide, what monitor, is equal to a pious, gentle woman?" said Peregrine.

Peregrine had, in the morning, ascertained from Mrs. Minton, with whom he had been sitting in what she called her "Boodore," and who had been largely camphorated by her spouse at luncheon-time, that the young ladies were to have thirty thousand pounds each,—an advance upon the rumoured twenty-five, an announcement that induced Peregrine to advance his pretensions in a similar ratio; to the which he was, moreover, stimulated by the free and easy manner of Captain M'Larrup, who came spanking and smacking about the house and grounds, rattling away with his key-bugle, in the most in-

dependent manner, with a sort of handkerchief-tossing air, that kept the gentleman who was anxious to be "settled," in a perpetual fever.

The return of Dory to look for her sister, and the appearance of M'Larrup in her wake, effectually put a stop to further negotiations between Peregrine and the lady at that moment; but Bunce felt that he had secured a "*locus standi*," that he had made a lodgment in the heart of his fair friend, and that, however pious she herself might be, and however pious she wished to make *him*, she would not quarrel, if, in the course of his probation, he did heedlessly let slip any improper or indecorous word; or if she did, he felt equally convinced that—

“Her eyes would pardon  
Before her tongue could chide.”

So that the break-in upon and consequent break-up of the *tête-à-tête* was not so serious a grievance to Peregrine as some people might think it. He had unbosomed himself to a certain extent—Margy had committed *her*-self in a certain degree; and when things had come to that point where sentiment transcended expression, and nothing but a practical exemplification of his feelings could have carried matters further, our adventurous suitor felt rather relieved than distressed by the appearance of the beauty and the bugler. He was conscious that he had made what soldiers call a demonstration: the secret of his admiration of Margy was a secret (to her, at least) no longer, and the avowal of her interest in his spiritual welfare afforded him ample assurance, that the knowledge of the state of his heart, which he had imparted to her, could not be unwelcome intelligence to one so good, so pure, and so ingenuous.

If it had not been that his respect for the serious principles of his intended had moderated his animal spirits, Peregrine could have danced merrily to the air of Paddy O'Rafferty, which Captain M'Larrup was cracking away with his bugle, and which had the effect of driving the gentle Margy from her bower, and, in fact, scattering the *parti Carré*.

Peregrine, as the reader, from what he has heard, may probably imagine, had established himself in the family, so far as to be "looked for at dinner," whenever he chose to stay; for his mornings were always devoted to the Mintons. So, as he followed, or, one might say, if it did not sound too sociable, accompanied ("haud passibus æquis,") his charming Margy to-

wards the house, having encountered the magisterial Minton on the lawn, the question put to him by that self-sufficient Solon was not, "Will you stay and dine, Bunce?" but "You are *not* going, Bunce!" which of itself satisfactorily proved that he was expected to stop.

Those who have loved really, truly, and sincerely—loved affectionately and devotedly, and therefore diffidently—must have often felt the rapturous delight of a quiet, cordial invitation from the father or mother of the beloved object, and who (with all the lover's fond, passionate, almost mad anxiety for staying in the society of her who alone made existence happiness,) have, in giving it, smiled, or seemed to smile upon, and even encourage, at least by implication, the doubting lover's pretensions, and will probably appreciate the pleasure that Peregrine felt at the question put by Minton. Of course, he hemmed, and ha'd, and boggled, and blushed, talked of his undress—his boots—and all that sort of thing, which objections, made to be overruled, were laughed at by Minton, who begged him to care nothing about his *déshabille*—there was no company, and he considered him one of themselves.

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## CHAPTER V.

FULLER says, "Some hold that when hospitality died in England, she gave her last groan among the yeomen of Kent, and still at our yeomen's tables you shall have as many joints as dishes,—no meat disguised with strange sauces; no straggling joint of a sheep in the midst of a pasture of grass, or beset with salads on every side, but more substantial food: no servitors (more nimble with their hands than the guests with their teeth) take away meat before stomachs are taken away: here you have that, which in itself is good, made better by the store of it, and best by the welcome to it."

This half-tormenting retrospect of foregone times taken by the worthy writer, might certainly have been justly applied to Minton's establishment at the present time. A well-covered board, good wine, and plenty of it, did ample justice to the welcome with which his guests were bidden; and there were in his manner an earnestness, a warmth, and a *bonhomie* withal,

which made the continuous flow of his words not so tiresome as might be expected, or the tone of his cracked voice quite so inharmonious as it would have sounded had he assumed a different style of conversation.

As we have before said, the magisterial office had been to him the object of his highest ambition. In possessing the judicial authority which the good-nature of the lord-lieutenant of his county, in the days when lord-chancellors attended to the recommendations of those provincial vicegerents, had secured him, he believed himself a magnate of the land, upon whom and whose decisions, to use his own words, "the eyes of the whole country were ;" and living, luckily for the enjoyment of his dignity, at a considerable distance from any brother of the bench, he

"Reigned and ruled without control "

in his own neighbourhood. The mighty man who found "Rome bricks, and left it stone," could not have been prouder of his imperial beneficence than Squire Minton was of the advantages he had secured, and the improvements he had made to, and in, the rapidly-increasing village of Twigglesford, wherein, happily and providentially for the inhabitants thereof, he had located himself.

Full of this happy delusion, the good-natured tyrant was the happiest man alive. Nothing occurred likely to be either nearly or remotely advantageous to Twigglesford of which Minton did not take the credit. But it should be observed, that he was chiefly eloquent upon his magisterial *dicta*, and the recapitulation of all his patriotic exertions *at*—even more than *after*—dinner, inasmuch as the servants in waiting, and the servants of their neighbouring friends, who occasionally stayed to help the establishment, and were during the progress of the meal present and in attendance, occupying their hands in moving and removing, putting down and taking up, and performing all the ordinary services required of them, were, nevertheless, certain to keep their ears open to catch whatever connected with and concerning the parish fell, or rather rose ceiling-high, from the lips of Mr. Minton.

The dinner-party immediately under notice consisted of mine host and the girls, Peregrine, Captain M'Larrup, Mr. Fleam the apothecary, &c., the Rev. Slobberton Mawks the curate, one of Margy's idols, who thought smiling and swearing equally sinful, who imbibed water upon principle instead of wine,—that is, in

company—but who in his own dirty lodgings “took to drinking ratafia,” and found the flesh willing and the spirit by no means weak.

This pale-faced, puny whipster was known in the parish by the nickname of the Ghost. The rector, a worthy, excellent man, a man of station and understanding, possessed every quality requisite for the fulfilment of the duties of a thoroughly good parish-priest;—kind, benevolent, charitable, and attentive upon all occasions to the wants, spiritual or personal, of his parishioners, he inspired in the hearts and minds of all his flock a cheerful confidence in the fruits of faith and good works, and, as has been said of one of his excellent predecessors, not only pointed out the road to eternal happiness, but led the way himself.

His wife, in all that becomes the helpmeet of a Protestant clergyman, seconded his endeavours to secure the comforts of the parishioners, and the parishioners duly appreciated the kindness and consideration with which they were treated. Mrs. Freeman, like the reverend doctor her husband, was constantly active in doing good—in promoting the worldly happiness of their poorer neighbours, and wherever she went she seemed to throw round her a gleam of happiness, which neither she nor the doctor considered incompatible with piety or devotion.

The reverend doctor patronized healthful exercises;—cricket, foot-ball, and quoits, on the village-green or the meadows below, in their several seasons, were encouraged in the evenings after labour was done, and the contending parties hospitably refreshed with provisions and good old ale,—and their wives and children were expected to join, if not in the sportive part, at least in the refreshments: everybody loved the rector and his lady,—blessings followed them at their departure from, and welcomed them on their return to, the parish. Their children were trained up to piety, to virtue, and to charity, but in the full enjoyment of harmless mirth and Christian cheerfulness.

The Reverend Slobberton Mawks, the curate, was exactly the reverse of the worthy rector. Sallow in countenance; mean in appearance; gloomy in disposition; affectingly pious and humble in company with his superiors, naturally vindictive and assuming whenever he fancied he could domineer over the poor; full of hatred of his rector, based upon the envy of his popularity: his whole object during the temporary absence of his superior was to impress the lower orders, not only with the sincerity of his piety, but to induce them, if possible, to draw from his sayings

and doings inferences and conclusions unfavourable to the respected incumbent of the parish, and his system and proceedings.

Music and cards he denounced in a tone—certainly not of thunder—for his voice, when holding forth (which he professed to do extempore), mingled in its tones the bleating of a ram and the braying of a donkey : and with uplifted eyes—eyes which in society his grovelling spirit and shuffling manner prevented his raising from the ground while standing, or from his lap when sitting, he inveighed, in terms which brought tears into the watchful orbs of Miss Margy Minton, against the enjoyment of any worldly amusement whatever. From the pulpit of the man (an attack upon whom behind his back was the whole and sole object of his curate's life) who blended in himself and family all the attributes of goodness and charity, and who enjoyed in his tranquil home a happiness and satisfaction which nature had not qualified the Rev. Slobberton Mawks ever to attempt to secure for himself, did he drivell his saintly nonsense, which would have been in matter and manner disgraceful to the tub of a conventicle.

Lovers are always jealous,—for without jealousy a lover's love cannot exist ; and at first Peregrine, who had really worked himself up to think Margy not only pretty, but sufficiently amiable to make an excellent wife, felt apprehensive of the influence of this puritan curate over her ; but a lengthened domestication cured him of his doubts and fears upon that point ; for although Mr. Mawks made a point, whenever it was possible, of planting himself next Margy, his views and objects partook not in the slightest degree of worldly amativeness.

Their conversation generally turned upon the expenditure of pinafors and nightcaps for the children at the schools,—the exemplary conduct of Mrs. Grout, the girls' schoolmistress, and of her excellent nephew, Joseph Grout, in the conduct of the boys' department. Having ascertained which, Peregrine resolved, whenever he could, to get on Margy's other side at table, and "improve the occasion," as Mr. Mawks would have said, by chiming in with all their praises of Mrs. Grout and her nephew Joseph, and affect the deepest possible interest in the establishment over which the curate was daily and hourly exercising his gloomy control and authority during the absence of the family from the rectory.

Dory was too much of this world, worldly, not to see the progress of Peregrine's courtship. Gradually, and day by day, he lessened the quantity of wine which he was in the habit of

taking after dinner: oaths, which sometimes, in a moment of hilarious excitement, or in repeating an anecdote of some absent acquaintance, he accidentally might let fall, never passed his lips: he never played cards, although one of his strongest recommendations to Squire Minton, in the outset of their acquaintance, was his being an uncommon good hand at whist;—in fact, Peregrine was in earnest, and with good reason; for in person, manner, and conversation—especially in the absence of Mr. Slobberton Mawks—she was unexceptionable; although lately, and since her acquaintance with the curate had increased to intimacy, there seemed, even when he was not by, something like a cloud hanging over her mind, and which at times appeared to oppress and weigh her down; nor were the boisterous spirits of Captain M'Larrup, or the loud tones of his key-bugle, likely to soothe or assuage a grief which appeared to Peregrine to have its origin in her mind, and a feeling of self-unworthiness and apprehension.

But to return to the dinner-parlour. Fleam, the apothecary, &c., of Twigglesford, an exceedingly intelligent person, was cordially invited by Minton, who used him as a fives-player does the walls of the court, to play his balls against, and make his game; he was the guest to whom all Minton's egotistical announcements of his magisterial proceedings were addressed, and whenever the conversation flagged, or was diverted from the favourite channel, he acted as flapper to his host, and contrived most dexterously to restore and bring it back.

“ Fish, dear Dory,” said Minton,—“ eh!—no—Margy, love—salmon—what—yes—plate—eh, Miss Margy?—Captain—eh?—what!—yes. Doctor—(he always called Fleam, Doctor)—send you some in a moment—ah—Captain, you have—yes. What I see—eh?—Mr. Mawks don’t object to fish—what? caught in nets—not barbarous—eh?—impaling worms and hooking their noses—know your prejudices—have lobster-sauce, what?—which? Fleam—I have carried my point—moved the pump—knew it could be done—took good advice, what—it has been the object of my life to carry that measure—put the pump back four feet six inches—cost me many a sleepless night—knew the right was with us—hope to cut down Watson’s chimney next week—eh? What?—dreadful eyesore.—Blackstone and Burn are both on *my* side—what?—I never will rest till I have completed the improvements in Twigglesford, what?—eh?—don’t you see?—glass of wine, Doctor?—sherry—madeira—eh?—what?—sherry and water, Fleam;—and as—your health—as

to Bates's fence, it's a perfect botch—have it down before September—nuisance—horrible—what!—put a gate instead of a stile—better for the ladies—and if—only one cannot do wonders, nor bring every great measure through, all at once—Rome for instance, as I say, was not built in a day—eh?—what?—well, of course I—know—I feel the importance of the task I have imposed on myself, and the difficulties likely to be incurred; but—I am sanguine—my heart is fixed upon it—and all my energies shall be devoted to it—and rely upon it, I will have Hawkins's pig-sty cleared away before I have done."

It should be remarked that this monologue continued unabated, unmitigated, through the whole of dinner: strangers, out of courtesy, or perhaps in their astonishment, used to attend to it, and remark upon it now and then, here and there endeavouring to exhibit and express something like an interest in the detail, but neither his own family nor any of the *habitués* paid the slightest attention to it;—the lodger in the first floor, over a coppersmith's workshop, never hears the sound and clatter of the rattling hammers. The general-postman's bell, while exercising his arm, is a dumb-bell to him; and the miller never attends to the noise of his grinding until the tinkling at the hopper awakes him to a sense of the necessity of action.

Fleam alone was bound to listen and reply;—this and the regular purveyance of camphor julep to Mrs. M., formed his principal occupations; and, faithful to his trust, he played his part to perfection, in consideration of Minton's liberality in the Christmas account, and his unflinching hospitality whenever he chose to partake of it.

Dory devoted herself to M'Larrup—Peregrine to Margy—Mr. Slobberton Mawks's share of the performance consisted in murmuring good advice into her left ear, while Bunce was whispering sentiment, well tinctured with piety, into her right one, startling with horror every now and then when the gallant Hibernian, "on the opposite side of the house," thoughtlessly rapped out an expletive, which Mawks was fully satisfied would doom him to eternal perdition.

"Doctor," continued Minton, "I sent that fellow Griggs to the treadmill—idle dog—no evidence against him as to stealing the sheep—what?—eh?—don't you see?—not a bit—but, summary jurisdiction's the thing, sir—he was a vagabond—a regular vagabond—booked him, sir, one month—on the stairs without a landing, eh? do him a great deal of good—wanted us once to send him to enjoy the comforts of the union—good roof over his

head—capital bran soup four days in the week—hot potatoes Mondays and Thursdays, and a feast of oatmeal porridge for Sunday—the idea—able-bodied fellow—stole Mr. Muddlechop's cock turkey—know the fact—had no evidence against him—no matter for that—satisfied *myself*—gave him a month's mounting—if I could have got rid of him altogether, he should have gone—don't want the stupid old formality of juries now—eh?—what?—don't you see?—M'Larrup, some champagne—what!"

M'Larrup bowed assent, and they drank.

"I haven't heard any more about the bellrope, doctor," said the squire; "I have been reading deuced hard to ascertain the right of the churchwardens. I know they have such special property in the furniture of the church, that they can bring an action in their joint names for any damage it sustains; but as to the bellrope—eh?—what?—I cannot quite make up my mind."

"—The rope is a knotty point, I presume," said Captain M'Larrup.

"—Pray, Captain M'Larrup," said Mr. Slobberton Mawks, "let me entreat of you, sir, not to jest upon such a subject—recollect it is the bellrope of a church of which you are speaking; and although my personal acquaintance with you is very slight, do not be offended with me if, for your own benefit and advantage, I venture to observe that such matters ought not to be liable to any conversational levity."

"By Jabus," said the captain, "I'm perfectly aware that the rope is a mighty delicate topic of conversation in some families. I meant nothing personal, Mr. Mawks."

"Rather *personal* though," said Peregrine, thrown off his guard by the opportunity of making a bad joke, which the captain's pronunciation afforded.

The squire laughed—so did the captain—so did the doctor—and so did Dory.

Mawks and Margy moved no muscle of their countenances. Marble or mummies could not have remained more steadily fixed than they. Peregrine's repentance followed his indiscretion as rapidly as the awful thunder succeeds the brilliant, dangerous lightning.

"I ought to apologize to *you*," whispered he to his fair neighbour, "for trifling on such a theme."

"Not to *me*," said Margy; "think of yourself, Mr. Bunce."

"Well," resumed Minton, "I shall not give it up—I'll try the question—eh, Doctor?—you know enough of me to know my firmness when embarked in a great cause—nothing can

daunt me—eh?—nothing stop me—no, no—placed, as I feel I am, as the guardian of the destinies of a very considerable population, I never will flinch—what?—eh?—pass the wine. Help yourself, Mr. Mawks."

"None, sir, I thank you," said the saintling, pushing the bottles from him with a sort of reverential dismay, and a formal activity in forwarding them up the table, expressive of his desire to have nothing whatever to do with them. His action and manner seemed visibly, if not sensibly, to affect Margy, and awaken her to a consciousness of the crime she was committing, by feeling herself rather more comfortable than usual, and without having, as younger sister, any right to do so, she audibly hinted, or, as Mr. Slobberton Mawks would have said, "gave out," that it was time for them to go.

It would perhaps not be quite decorous to repeat the observation which Dory whispered to the captain with the key-bugle, in reply to the suggestion; however, it seemed best to her to comply with it, more especially as, if they did not speedily go up to "Ma," "Ma" might probably come down to them; and so, after one or two gentle hints to the captain not to sit too long, the girls retired, Peregrine satisfied—or rather being much dissatisfied—that he had prejudiced his cause considerably by breaking in upon the rule of seriousness which for the last two or three weeks he had adopted for his conduct towards the object of his attentions.

When the ladies left the room, the Rev. Slobberton Mawks made his exit through one of the windows which opened upon the lawn, and speedily disappeared in the gloom of the autumnal evening, which was fast deepening into night.

Even were it possible, it would not be prudent to detail the conversation which ensued. Mr. Minton took the lead, haranguing on his indefatigable exertions for the good of mankind. Upon which proclamation of his personal merits, the captain continued now and then to break in with a short and smart Irish story, keeping Peregrine in a state of disquietude,—not because he was either unamused or offended by the drollery of his opposite neighbour, but for fear Margy might overhear some of the points, and punish him with her frowns for sitting so long in such a loose and dissolute society, at the head of which was her own papa.

The fact is, that Margy, from being an exceedingly good and amiable girl, had, under the influence of Mr. Slobberton Mawks and the schoolmistress, fallen into a state of gloominess and

dread of worldly criminality, which state seldom or never is fixed or stationary. Like many bodily disorders, its nature is to continue constantly progressing, either for the better or the worse ; and the mind once tainted with what can be called neither more nor less than fanaticism, becomes entirely absorbed ; and unless some means are devised to restore it to its natural tone, is at last irrecoverably destroyed. Under the influence of this disease, for such it is, the nearest and dearest ties of relationship are disregarded ; and the parent who has reared his child is, in some cases, an object of compassion and even contempt in the eyes of his offspring, while, on the other hand, the child is denounced by the parent as unworthy to live and unfit to die.

When Peregrine was first introduced to the Mintons, Margy was all that a daughter and a Christian should be ; but something had occurred—what, perhaps we may live to find out—which had given a sudden shock to her feelings, curdled the kindly nature of her disposition, and, with a rapidity scarcely credible, converted the amiable, pious, yet cheerful girl, into a gloomy ascetic decrier of all worldly acts, manners, and customs, and corrector-general of what she considered all the improprieties of which her father, mother, and sister, were daily and hourly guilty. Dancing was sinful—cards were certain condemnation—laughter profane—no music but that of psalms and hymns was to be tolerated—a play was perdition, and cricket on the village green destruction, inasmuch as, besides the positive crime of knocking a ball about with a bat, it involved the heinous criminality of drinking fermented liquors, tending to the vice of drunkenness, which she held to be the greatest vice of all, inasmuch as, while man is under its influence, it is the cherishing parent of many others.

Peregrine's acuteness of observation did not fail to exhibit to his view clearly and distinctly the progressive descent of the young lady's spirits, the change of her principles, and increasing gloom of her mind ; and having now, as he believed, made some effect in the character of lover, and having really a respect for, and almost an admiration of, her merits and disposition, as he found them in the beginning of his acquaintance, he resolved to adopt such a line of conduct, and such a tone of conversation, as should convince her of the influence which she possessed over him, and gratify her by seeing the success of her efforts to save him from perdition. With this intent and purpose he began to moralize and sentimentalize, and altogether to eschew wine, of

which he was, if not immoderately, at least moderately, fond—drank nothing but water at or after dinner, contenting himself, like his worthy compeer, Mr. Mawks, by the consolatory imbibition of stronger liquors when he was “at home and alone”—and thus determined to “go the whole hog.”

“He cast himself into the saint-like mould,  
Groan’d, sighed, and prayed, while godliness was gain,  
The loudest bagpipe of the squeaking train.”

Minton himself became exceedingly uneasy at the altered condition of his daughter, and not quite well pleased to see Peregrine, as he called it, “humouring her.” However, Peregrine was now permitted to accompany her to the schools. Their conversation was eternally on one subject:

“As if religion were intended  
For nothing else but to be mended ;  
In falling out with that or this,  
And finding somewhat still amiss,  
More peevish, cross, and splenetic,  
Than dog distract, or monkey sick—  
That with more care keep holyday  
The wrong, than others the right way ;  
Compound for sins they are inclined to,  
By damning those they have no mind to.  
Still so perverse and opposite,  
As if they worshipp’d God for spite,  
The self-same thing they will abhor  
One way, and long another for.  
Free-will they one way disavow,  
Another nothing else allow.  
All piety consists therein  
In them—*in other men all sin.*”

Slobberton Mawks having seen, with infinite satisfaction, the salutary change in Bunce’s manner, conduct, and conversation, gave full sanction to the spiritual association of his pious young friends, whose sympathetic wanderings, it must be confessed, did by no means tend to modify the laughter of Dory and her captain, who, conscious of no particular sin, and feeling no particular sorrow, were, and, as it seemed, under the paternal sanction, getting on remarkably well; in fact, he was an exceedingly “agreeable rattle,” a man of honour and spirit, of a good family, with a name not too euphonic, but perfectly well known and duly

appreciated in the county whence he came,—with quite sufficient property, and enough of solid expectation, to justify his approaches upon the heart and hand of Miss Minton.

Oliver Bunce, “our worthy uncle,” was, during the period of Peregrine’s probation, exceedingly anxious to be regularly informed of the progress of his suit; but Noll was anything but a saint, and did not quite relish the extraordinary depression of his nephew’s spirits, which was but too evident; for although *sub rosâ*, and in the parlour with the corner cut off, before mentioned, he took his wine, still the gloom of Mawks and the Miss had really begun to affect him; and although at first he applied himself to the system hypocritically, and with interested views, they had somehow contrived to influence, or rather terrify him into sorrow and remorse, and to a morbid dislike of all the innocent recreations to which, like other men of his standing in life and society, he had previously been affected.

“Take my advice, Peregrine,” said Noll, “don’t shilly-shally away your time—preaching is good in season and out of season; but if you wish really to marry the girl—pop—pop, Peregrine, pop—she’ll make a good wife if you take her now: her affection for you—the necessary attention to domestic duties—the new ties and interests which will occupy her will render her an excellent woman and an admirable member of society; but if she goes on in her present course, she’ll be in a mad-house in a month, or, if not, in a fish-pond—pop—pop—whatever you do, pop.”

“My dear uncle,” said Peregrine, “it is exceedingly well for you, and exceedingly easy, to say, pop—pop—but she is not sufficiently interested in worldly matters to attend to the sort of appeal you suggest.”

“Why, then,” said Oliver, “you have overshot your mark—you have waited too long—you have been too pious—you have tumbled over your pony when you only hoped to get into the saddle.”

“I really do not feel good enough,” said Peregrine, “to attempt a proposal.”

“Oh!” said Noll, “you are really serious—they *have* bitten you, have they?—why, then, and in that case, you are safe—secure—sure of her. So now do take the advice of an older man than yourself, and save her—from herself and the popinjay puppy who is making her miserable.”

“If I thought,” said Peregrine, helping himself inadvertently to a well-sized glass of port wine,—“if I thought it would an-

swer—only her sister Dory is so flippant and flighty, and looks so strangely, that I dread falling under the lash of her satire—and if I should be rejected—”

“ Why should you be rejected ? ” said Noll. “ If the girl wasn’t interested about you, she wouldn’t have taken such pains to do you good—the parson won’t snap her up.”

“ Snap ! ” said Peregrine ; “ he has no notion of snapping—his only pet in this world is a fat sheep, which he keeps in his garden with a riband tied round its neck ; he eats no meat—lives upon roots—drinks nothing but water, and holds celibacy to be essential to the clerical character.”

“ If I was Minton,” said Noll, “ he never should set foot inside my doors.”

“ Why, to say the truth,” said Peregrine, “ it is not Minton’s fault that he *is* so much there ; he is a great stickler for the voluntary principle, and exhibits his zeal in the cause practically by inviting himself six days in the week out of the seven.”

“ Take my advice, Peregrine,” said Oliver ; “ rely upon it, I am right,—let Margy, as you call her, be as full of puritanism as an egg’s full of meat, the sooner she gets away from the granivorous animal with whom she is now pastured, the better. So there, now you have my mind,—help yourself to some more wine, and settle the affair comfortably.”

Peregrine certainly much improved in fortitude after his moderate indulgence in Oliver’s black-strap, which was right good and ruby bright, and, temporarily released from the thraldom to which he had now for some time submitted, in order to carry his point, began to think to himself that Margy *would* like to be married, and that now and then she looked as if she would, and moreover, as if she liked *him* ; and before the evening or the wine was finished, the enterprising young man resolved upon “ popping,” as his uncle called it, on the very first available opportunity.

It must not be concealed from the reader, especially at this critical part of the history, that, of the two sisters, Peregrine really admired Dory much more than Margy. Margy had succeeded in darkening his prospects, and making him to a certain degree uncomfortable,—a course of proceeding which, when he first saw her, he did not in the slightest degree anticipate. His avowed and acknowledged admiration of what he then used to call “ nice, modest, quiet, retiring little things,” led him in the outset really and truly to prefer Margy ; but as the fog thickened and the gloom increased, and she became so exceedingly

melancholy, he more than once thought seriously of edging off from her, and devoting himself to the Thalia of the family ; for Peregrine, as we know, had a tolerably good opinion of himself and of his captivating powers, and never doubted that if he had sedulously attacked the lively fair, in the first instance, Captain M'Larrup and his key-bugle would have, before this, been dismissed with scorn. Now, however, he had gone too far—four hours every day did he devote to the pinafores in the schools, taking an active part in the examinations of the young philosophers in their progress through the course of education which was to fit them so admirably for driving teams, holding ploughs, threshing wheat, cutting hedges, digging trenches, and thatching barns, when they grew to man's estate : no—his uncle was right—he ought to bring matters to a conclusion—and he would ; and with this prudent resolution strong in his mind, he retired to rest, his inward man much cheered with the generous wine which he had swallowed, and his brain full of visions of peaceful bliss in a married life.

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## CHAPTER VI.

THE eve of a “proposal,” or, as Oliver Bunce calls it, “popping,” cannot fail to be a very interesting, exciting, and agitating epoch in a man's career. Peregrine lay awake during the greater part of the night; his mind and thoughts wholly occupied—not with doubts or fears as to the reception of his addresses, but with arrangements of his future plans, internally feeling and believing that if he married Margy at this particular juncture, he might save her from precipitation into the depths of gloomy puritanism, and, catching her just as she was sliding down the precipice, recover her, and restore her to the sweet and chastened cheerfulness which first had decided him in his choice—of her fortune.

Baron Gremier says—and says with wonderfully good sense—speaking of Bouret's prophetic book, “*Le Vrai Bonheur*,” upon every page of which was written “*Le Roi est venu chez Bouret*,” and in which he anticipated the events of 1840 in the year 1760.

“ Ce que je sais, c'est qu'une bombe, poussée hors de son

mortier par un telle force de poudre, en égard à une telle résistance de l'air, décrit nécessairement une telle parabole. Elle s'élevera à une telle hauteur ; mais lorsqu'elle y sera arrivée, il faudra bien qu'elle descende. Voilà l'image et l'histoire des empires. Celui qui arrêterait la bombe au point de sa plus grande élévation serait un Dieu ; celui qui l'entreprend, soit en agissant, soit en écrivant, n'est qu'un fou."

What the accomplished Frenchman said of nations, Peregrine thought of Margy ; and as we have already found him advocating the doctrine that no strong passion stands still, but either advances or recedes daily and hourly, it is easy to imagine that it seemed to him a matter of vital importance to prevent the fall of the young lady by checking her flight before she had reached the highest possible pitch of maudlin absurdity.

When morning came and breakfast was over, Peregrine prepared himself with no common care for his visit to the MINTONS. The weather was propitious for the philanthropic ramble of the young lady, and as it was a half-holiday at the schools, the opportunity of confessing his feelings would easily and naturally occur.

Peregrine was puzzled upon one point only, and that turned upon his hesitation between policy and propriety, inasmuch as he doubted whether to speak to Minton first upon the subject of his "honourable intentions," or to follow uncle Noll's advice and "pop" in the first instance to Margy. A brief consideration of the subject brought him to the determination to do the latter, and thus resolved, he mounted his horse and proceeded to the home of his beloved.

On his way thither he encountered Mr. Slobberton Mawks, going, as he presumed, his pastoral rounds : a cold bow was all the acknowledgment the saintly young gentleman vouchsafed him, and certainly Peregrine was not in the smallest degree disposed to bring him to any more sociable communication. A few minutes after this rencontre, Peregrine was met by Minton's coachman galloping the squire's favourite horse : he touched his hat to Peregrine, but the expression of his countenance was peculiar, and Peregrine felt that in spite of his speed he either wished to ask or tell him something :—nothing, however, passed, except the horses, that of Mr. Bunce being even more startled at the very rapid career of the plump Phaeton than his master. Peregrine's apprehension was, that somebody had been taken ill at the squire's, and that the coachman was either flying after the apothecary, or the parson—or both.

Equally anxious and excited, he therefore urged his steed into a canter, and reached the *Squiry* earlier than he had originally intended, and, using the familiarity of intimacy, rode into the stable-yard, dismounted, and gave the animal into the charge of a groom-boy, whom he found leaning against the wall, earning his board, lodging, clothes, wages, and washing, in a manner the best calculated to afford him the least trouble. Having done which, and knowing all the “ways of the house,” he proceeded through what was called the “little gate,” into the grounds, proposing to enter the mansion by some of the windows, which, as the reader is already aware, opened into a verandah and thence to the lawn.

Treading lightly over the turf, his ears were suddenly attracted to a dialogue carried on, not in the gentlest tone, between the squire and his lady; and although Peregrine was as curious as his neighbours, he would have scorned to become an eaves-dropper, but placed as he was within a dozen yards of the contending parties, he was apprehensive that if he exhibited himself suddenly, he might get all the credit of having listened to the earlier part of the parley, without having, in point of fact, benefited by incurring the imputation. This dread, coupled perhaps with a little natural and by no means impertinent solicitude to comprehend the nature and subjects of quarrels and discussions in a family of which he was so soon to become a member, induced Peregrine to retrace his steps for two or three yards, and glide suddenly into a little *bosquet* of evergreens, whose favouring shelter had not been injured by the chills of autumn, and which served to conceal from the drawing-room windows a dairy or some such building, which, unless so hidden, would have been an eyesore. In this *bocage* stood Peregrine, almost trembling lest the dairy-maid or anybody else should approach his hiding-place, and heard distinctly that which follows:—

“I can’t believe it yet,” said Minton; “no—I can’t—I certainly have seen a change—a great change; but considering the position I hold here—looked up to, as the benefactor of Twigglesford, I cannot bring myself to think that even if she could have been prevailed upon to do such a thing, anybody in the position of that fellow would have dared—dared, I use the word advisedly,—to have been, as the books say, ‘aiding and abetting her’;—no, Mrs. M.; I’ll have the ponds dragged—I’ll——”

“What’s the use of *that*, M.?” said Mrs. Minton; “they cannot both be in a pond.”

“I almost wish they were,” said Minton.

Peregrine's attention was doubled ; something serious had occurred—no doubt Miss Dory and her Hibernian horn-blower had taken themselves off. “Good riddance too,” thought Bunce ; “I shall get quit of his horrid jokes, at which I can't help laughing, and so be able the more easily to adapt myself to the sober ways of the dear, gentle Margy.”

“You see her bed was not slept in,” said Minton, “so nobody can tell when she went ; and in these days of steam and iron she may be a hundred and fifty miles off by this time ; still I do think something worse has happened to her.”

“Nothing worse *can* have happened to her,” said the consolatory mother. “All this comes of over-educated people, M.”

“There is no use, my dear Mrs. M., to argue, or talk, or reason,” said Minton ; “what are we to *do* ? that's the question ; what are we to say when Bunce comes ?—he's sure to be here soon ; at present, perhaps, the history is not generally known to the public ; the respect due to my character, and the interest I take in the welfare of the people, may check the activity of their gossip, but it can't be long concealed.”

“Why, tell him at once,” said Mrs. M., “that is, if you care so much about him.”

“Yes, I *do* care a good deal about him,” said Mr. Minton, “because he knows a good many people ; his uncle is rich—an odd old fellow, and a bit of what *I* call a bore ; but Bunce himself is sharp and clever, and fond of the girl—”

“And was *she* fond of *him* ?” asked Mrs. Minton.

“Why,” said Minton, “considering myself a judge in these matters, I should have said decidedly yes ; but latterly she has grown so glumpy and dumpy, that I don't know what she was fond of ; and *if* what you think is true, and *that* fellow is the partner of her flight, it will be a shock upon Bunce, no doubt ; however, it is an ill wind that blows nobody good—Dory shall have the whole of Margy's five-and-twenty thousand pounds in addition to her own.”

This last speech rang particularly strong in Peregrine's ears ; —a new order of things burst upon his mind,—it was Margy who had fled, and Dory remained ; and Dory would have fifty thousand pounds instead of five-and-twenty, and fifty thousand *was* the sum.

“I'm exceedingly glad,” said Minton, “that our friend M'Larrup was gone this morning before anything was known of the matter.”

More music to Peregrine's ear. The bugler had sounded a retreat—probably defeated and rejected by the vivacious object of his affections. Who the fellow was, the suspected partner of Margy's flight, he had not yet ascertained: he knew it was not Slobberton Mawks, because he had met him, meek and placid as usual, nor, even if he had not, would his thoughts have glanced towards him.

It did, however, strike him, that Miss Margaret Minton *did* sometimes cast her eyes in a rather worldly manner upon the nephew of the schoolmistress, who officiated as master of the boys' department. He was a fine, handsome person, standing some six feet in height, gentle and simple in behaviour, and, with all Mr. Slobberton Mawks's seriousness, exhibited a sort of winning solicitude for Miss Margy's personal comforts and convenience during her often-made and long-protracted visits at the schools, that he at length became the object of her daily thoughts, the subject of her nightly dreams, until all the bright visions of her future happiness were identified with this godly young man,—he was, in fact, the true saint of her idolatry. “*Just*,” as Miss Prudence Barnard says to Lady Betty—

“*Just with Roger's head of hair on,  
Roger's mouth and pious smile.*”

The coincidence certainly was strange and strong. The pious virgin had suddenly disappeared, and the devout youth had simultaneously absconded. In how far his exemplary aunt, the trusty guardian of the rising generation of Twigglesford females, was privy to or concerned in the elopement, it is not possible as yet to determine; but one thing is certain, that Miss Margery, in discussing with that most respectable individual the pleasures of benevolence, did mention that she was enabled to gratify her feelings and work out her principles to a certain extent, from having had two hundred and fifty pounds a year left her by her aunt, who was also her godmother, over which her father had no control, and with which he was good enough never to interfere: he certainly made an allowance to her sister to the same amount, but that of course was voluntary, and therefore precarious; but *hers* was independent.

Peregrine having heard as much as he wished, and infinitely more than he expected to hear, backed out of his snugger, and carefully retraced his steps, recrossed the stable-yard, and, advancing to the front door of the house, rang the bell, and was

forthwith ushered into the library, or, as Minton was pleased to call it, his court-room.

"Mr. Bunce," says the servant, throwing open the door. "Bunce," said Minton, advancing to shake him by the hand, "how are you?—how are you?—how is my old friend, your excellent uncle, to-day?"

"Quite well, thank you," replied the grateful nephew for so affectionate an inquiry after the "bore."

"How is Mrs. Minton?" asked Bunce, rather surprised at not finding her in the room.

"Pretty well—pretty well," said Minton; "she has just gone upstairs."

"And the young ladies?" said Peregrine.

"Quite well—quite well," said Minton. "Your little favourite has left us for a day or two—gone to see some friends of hers. I thought it would mend her spirits; for she, I assure you, participates considerably in my feelings and disposition, and over-exerts herself for the good of others,—in fact, our great delight is to be of use to Twigglesford."

"And Miss Minton?"

"She is in her room," said the veracious papa. "You'll dine with us?—eh?—you must—or else we shall think Margy is the magnet—what!—you must excuse me, but there'll be Dory and her mamma to talk to, and you'll have them all to yourself, for our friend the captain has taken himself off. I have many important things to attend to—some parochial investigations to make—and a complaint about Dobbs's boar-pig, which I must get ringed—it is incalculable the mischief which has accrued to my neighbours from his grubbing; then we have a vestry at three, in which the great question of the ducks in the rector's pond comes on; as the reverend doctor is not here, and I—very differently from some of my family—am an uncompromising vindicator of the Church and its members, I am determined to assert her rights."

"Quite orthoducks," said Peregrine, whose dreadful propensity for punning had been completely subdued during the last stage of Margy's pious fever, and now burst out with redoubled fury.

"Ha! ha!" exclaimed Minton; "very good—very good; only the matter is not one to joke about: however, I'll just step upstairs to Dory, and let her know you are here; for she seems rather glumpy herself—her sister's going away is something; but, between you and me, I think she and her particular friend,

Captain M'Larrup, have had what they call a tiff—he did not want to go, or she didn't want him to stay, or something. 'Gad, I know, as the people say, 'all the fat's in the fire ;' but for my own part, wholly engrossed as I am with public affairs, I let all domestic matters take their course : my maxim is, Do as you would be done by. My girls know they are their own mistresses : if they please themselves, they please me—eh ?—that's the way : so till half-past four take care of yourself."

Saying which, Mr. Minton proceeded to announce that Mr. Bunce was below and would dine ; adding, that he would get Fleam the apothecary, and perhaps Casey the attorney, to join them,—at the same time cautioning both mother and daughter to be in the "same story" with himself as to Margy's absence ; the fact being, and which rendered the philosophical conduct of the family under such apparently distressing circumstances less extraordinary, that Margy had left a note for her sister stating the truth—whatever that was, and entreating her prayers for her happiness, and an eventual restoration to her affection and society.

Mrs. Minton knew the truth too,—but neither mother nor daughter dare proclaim it to papa authoritatively,—they dreaded the effects which his certainty of the fact might possibly produce upon the "people" of Twigglesford : and, to do full justice to the virtuous hypocrisy of all parties, it must be stated, that when Mrs. Grout the schoolmistress, aunt of Joseph Grout, and it is to be hoped by this time aunt-in-law of the *ci-devant* Miss Margaret Minton, missed her nephew from his daily duty in the seminary, her surprise and astonishment seemed equalled only by her alarm and anxiety.

"There is a tide in the affairs of men,  
Which, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune."

Peregrine Bunce resolved to embark forthwith : by his excellent generalship he had made himself acquainted with the untoward circumstances that had occurred exactly at the moment when the knowledge could be made available to his purposes. Had he waited to be informed by the family of Margy's defection and probable marriage, any sudden change in his movements might have been considered as consequent upon his disappointment and defeat in that quarter, and then the transfer of his attentions to her sister would have appeared like heartlessness, or revenge for his wrongs ; and if he had been so informed

authoritatively, his intelligence would probably not have included the fact that Dory's fortune was doubled by the event: but now, ignorant of the cause of Margy's absence, he could fairly and properly take advantage of it, and ingratiate himself with the wealthier sister, who, as if everything were fated to combine and conspire favourably for him, had, according to papa's notion, parted in anger with her captain, who, after all, might never have had any serious intentions beyond making himself, as Peregrine thought, "infernally agreeable," and who was thus opportunely removed from the field at the very moment when his absence was most important.

That Peregrine Bunce was vain, even if it had not been previously admitted, nobody who glances at the concatenation of thoughts and designs just displayed to the reader's notice could doubt; but one thing ought to be conceded, namely, that to a man of his sanguine temperament and self-approbation, the looks and manner of Dory Minton did, to a certain extent, justify his notion that he was not *disagreeable* to her: more than once she had quitted her friend the captain to listen to Peregrine's conversation; and, in fact, it was not until he considered it politic to assume the puritanical character and phraseology, that she quite gave him up. She was a remarkably shrewd young woman, and left him off, as it were, not so much because the style he had adopted was disagreeable to her, or because she would not interfere with her sister's pious work of regeneration, but because she was perfectly aware that it was an assumption, that he was struggling—not devoutly—with his nature and disposition to act a part merely for the purpose of ingratiating himself with his intended wife—

"With face and fashion to be known  
For one of pure election;  
With eyes all white, and many a groan;  
With neck aside to draw in tone,  
With harp in 's nose—or he is none."

"Well, Mr. Bunce!" said Dory, entering the room; "so here you are, without your friend and companion."

"Forgive me," said Bunce, "I hope I find both in you."

"Oh, you are too civil by half," said Dory; "you know what I mean—Margy has played truant."

"So I hear," said Peregrine, "and I must say I do not regret it, provided change of air and change of scene and society

tend to enliven her spirits ; she really looks at the world most gloomily. I cannot help thinking that your exceedingly good curate has a great deal to answer for."

"I suppose he believes he is doing his duty," said Dory, "but I am sure he has produced an effect upon her mind which can neither benefit her here nor hereafter."

"Egad," said Peregrine, pulling up the shirt-collars, which, when he arrived at the Squiry, under different views, he had tucked down, in order to give himself a serious air,—"Egad, you are right ; rely upon it, Miss Dory, there is nothing more foreign to the spirit of the Protestant religion than unnecessary gloom."

"Why," said Dory, looking at him with a pair of black eyes, such as one *does* see sometimes, conveying as much to the mind as all the words in Johnson's Dictionary could convey, properly arranged for the purpose,—"I always thought so ; but it struck me you were rapidly falling into the same line, and became, as I thought, proportionately dull and—I know you'll forgive me—disagreeable."

"Ah ! there it is," said Peregrine ; "you tyrants can't endure the slightest defection from your authority : poor dear Margy, perhaps, when she returns, will be better—I say better; for, upon my honour and word, Miss Minton, I do assure you I went on humouring her fancy, really and truly because I thought opposition would be seriously injurious—"

"—And because," said Dory, "you felt that her interest in your improvement and edification was genuine and sincere."

It was difficult for Peregrine at this point to keep his countenance,—knowing all he did actually know, and suspecting a great deal more ; but he was by no means a bad actor, as the reader knows, and he took the favourable opportunity of throwing in a little bit of sentiment.

"I believe," said he, "so firmly believe, in the ingenuousness of women, and am so completely satisfied of their candour and consistency, that I honestly confess I feel grateful—yes, deeply grateful—for any manifestation of interest on the part of an amiable, well-bred, well-educated young lady, however indifferent I may, in the worldly sense of the word, be to her personal charms or her mental attractions."

"Oh, Mr. Bunce !" said Dory ; "wicked Mr. Bunce ! you don't mean to say that the personal charms of Margy, and her mental attractions, did not produce an effect upon you ; how else do you account for the total change from 'gay to grave,'

which her influence has worked upon you during the last month?"

"Influence, my dear Miss Minton!" said our hero: "what you take for influence is simply a friendly interest."

"Very probably," said Dory, in a tone and with a look which, to any less adventurous speculator than our friend, could not have failed to be uncomfortable.

"I have already said," continued he, "that I saw Margy rapidly descending into the vale of gloom, and—"

"—— And so," interrupted Dory, "you thought you might as well take a stroll in the shade with her. Now, do you know that I know more of you than you perhaps think I do: your natural character is full of gaiety and playfulness—like mine; you have been making yourself unhappy for I don't know how many days, in order to sympathize with my poor deluded sister—all against the grain, Mr. Bunce!—take my advice—try to redeem her—retrieve her from the melancholy into which she has fallen, and, instead of adding to the rapidity of her tumble by associating yourself in her pursuits, bring her back to her wonted spirits and the usual amusements of our little family circle."

This speech confirmed Peregrine in his first supposition,—that Dory always preferred *him* to the captain, inasmuch as *he* knew what *she* did not know that he *did* know—that Margy was gone, if not past redemption, at least past all chance of a return to the domestic circle.

"Ah!" said Peregrine, with a sigh; "to do that I have no power—nor is it likely I should have: where the heart is not engaged, all efforts to affect an interest are vain; had I been fortunate enough to have engaged the affections of a being full of talent and animation—"

"—— Like *me*," said Dory archly; "and perhaps if you had, will you be kind enough to tell me what would have happened to you?"

"By heavens! Miss Minton," exclaimed Peregrine in an impassioned tone.

"Hush! hush!" said Dory; "swearing, Mr. Bunce! what would Margy and her confessor Mr. Mawks say if they heard you?"

"I care not," said Peregrine, "I never did care: all that has passed has been the madness of despair—I have been mistaken—I have been deluded; and the moment your sister returns, I shall—after what you have said—consider it necessary to explain to her the real state of my feelings."

"When," said Dory, "do you expect her back?"

"Your father says in a few days," said Bunce.

"And where do you think she is gone?" said Dory.

"On a visit to some friends of yours and hers, as Mr. Minton says," answered Bunce.

"And do you believe *that?*" asked Dory.

"Of course—why not?" said Bunce.

"Why, if you *do*," said Dory, "you sadly wasted your time in listening under the laurels, by the dairy-door, to the confidential conversation of my worthy and respectable parents."

"The what?" said Bunce.

"Don't affect ignorance," said Dory, "and don't deny the fact; the windows of my room command that bower—I saw the whole of your proceeding—I have told my father of it—he has told me, as nearly as he could recollect it, the dialogue you overheard between him and my mother. I don't mean to say, Mr. Bunce, that your sudden conversion from Cant and Margy is at all attributable to my father's expressed determination to deprive her of her fortune in my favour, in consequence of that, which *you* are perfectly aware is not a visit to any friends of ours; but I would, as a friend, advise you to find the way through the same 'side gate' to the stables. Get your horse, and deprive us of the pleasure of your company at dinner, assuring yourself, however angry my father may be with my sister for doing an unaccountably foolish thing, that she shall *not* suffer to the extent which he, in a moment of anger, declared she should, and that therefore I am not so 'great a catch' as you think me."

"My dear Miss Minton," said Bunce, turning as white as a sheet, "I—really—upon my honour!"

"Honour, Mr. Bunce," said Dory, "do as I advise—it is your only course; I am sure papa, with his strong feelings in favour of the people of Twigglesford, as he says, would not do them justice by permitting you to remain amongst us."

"But really——"

"Really," said Dory.

At this moment a shrill noise was heard, as of a horn blown skilfully.

"What's that?" said Bunce.

"Captain M'Larrup's key-bugle," said Dory. "I was obliged to order him away this morning on some official duty, which, if I had not forced him to attend to, I feared he would neglect, in order to stay here; so you see I turn *my* influence to some

account. I will now wish you a good morning; for I must run to meet him, and, in parting with you—as far as I am concerned—for ever, I would earnestly repeat my advice as to the side gate and the stable-yard, at your earliest convenience."

Saying which, Dory darted off, leaving Mr. Peregrine Bunce in a state not particularly enviable. He certainly had botched the business; and any further attempt upon the hearts or fortunes of the Mintons was evidently fruitless; accordingly, when Dory quitted the room by one window, he abdicated by the other, and, in crossing the courtyard to get his horse, had the additional satisfaction of seeing two maids (as they are called) looking out of the laundry casement, laughing—evidently at *him*—in the most ecstatic manner.

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## CHAPTER VII.

THE rapidity with which important events—at least important in their degree—happen in this world, is rather startling. That Rome was not built in a day, was a favourite saying of Mr. Minton's, and one which nobody can controvert: but Rome might be burnt down in a night. Look at our own houses of Parliament, which seemed really and integrally part of the British constitution,—destroyed, annihilated, gone, in a few short hours. Descend we from those to the pert-looking mansion of Squire Minton, and look at the change of affairs which half a day has worked in that establishment.

A pious daughter, who on the preceding evening was looked upon as the most perfect of human beings, has eloped with the parish schoolmaster, Joseph Grout. Her devoted lover having turned listener, and therefore having transferred—not his affections—but his addresses to her lively sister, has received her *congé* instead of the kicking he deserved. That lovely sister has accepted the gallant Captain M'Larrup, with her father's consent; and the Reverend Slobberton Mawks, for what reason nobody exactly knows, and nobody seems inclined to ask, has, to use a conventional term, "bolted," leaving behind him nothing but his pet sheep and a pale-faced page-clad foot-boy.

What the magisterial energies of Mr. Minton may do in the investigation and elucidation of this abrupt and mysterious re-

treat, it is not for us to surmise ; indeed, our interest in the affairs of the Twigglesford community ceases simultaneously with the abdication, or more properly speaking the ejection, of Mr. Peregrine Bunce.

To describe the feelings of this last-mentioned gentleman as he wended his way homeward, would require infinitely greater powers of language than the narrator of this history possesses. It was not simply the defeat which overwhelmed him, but the detection of his meanness, and the additional meanness of changing his course, founded upon the original meanness of listening. As to any further attempt even upon the friendship of the family, it was evidently out of the question. But even all this accumulation of disasters was light when compared with his anticipations of uncle Noll's railery, and the triumphant chuckle with which his detail of his disasters would be received by the old "bore." Peregrine, however, was a wary young gentleman, and it is not quite impossible that in the course of his ride he might have made up a version of the history a little at variance with the real facts.

Lord Chesterfield somewhere says, that contempt is never forgiven, although resentment is sometimes forgot. The *abias* which Peregrine had received from Dory would have been robbed of half its sharpness if it had been gravely pronounced ; if Mr. Minton himself had broken off the acquaintance,—nay, if he had been thrust from the door in a serious quarrel, he would have felt comparatively happier than he was in his present condition.

One resolution Peregrine had arrived at before he reached his uncle's gate, the prudence and rationality of which the reader will readily admit,—that of immediately retreating from the scene of his discomfiture ; for although he had formed no plan for his future attacks, it was evident that his remaining where he was could do him no service, while it might possibly, or indeed would probably, involve him in occasional meetings with his quondam friends, which could not fail to be exceedingly painful to at least one of the parties.

"Well, Peregrine," said his uncle, as he entered the snug-gery ; "well—did you give them my message ?—are they coming ?—when ?—what day ?—I shall be delighted—all of them—a sociable squeeze—pressing invitation, as the old joke goes."

"Why," said Peregrine, looking as calm and composed as under the circumstances it was possible to do ; "I think, my

dear uncle, we may as well postpone the pleasure of seeing them here."

"Eh!—what!" exclaimed Noll; "postpone—why postpone?—never put off anything except your great-coat on a hot day, or your hat to a lady, as the joke goes: why delay?—delays are dangerous—recollect the old maxim as you may find it in every book in the world—

"'Happy's the wooing  
That's not long a-doing.'

eh, Peregrine?"

"That's true," said Bunce; "but there *are* cases which terminate very speedily and suddenly too, the results of which are not so happy as might upon your principle be expected."

"Hey," said the uncle; "anything wrong? halting on the march? what?"

"Why, not exactly *that*," said Peregrine; "the march has been exceedingly rapid,—the object of my affections has suddenly disappeared."

"What, become an invisible girl?" said Noll.

"True," said Peregrine, "but \_\_\_\_"

"\_\_\_\_ But what?" said Noll; "having refused—rejected—cut you?"

"Why, no," faltered Peregrine; "it had not come to *that*;—she went—in fact, my dear uncle, I am not sufficiently aware of the circumstances of her going to describe them particularly: her father is very much shocked, and I, of course, am astounded, and, to say truth, resolved never to see the faces of any of the family again."

"Dear me, dear me," said Noll; "why so? why so? Some of them have very pretty faces, but \_\_\_\_"

"In short," said Peregrine, "Miss Margaret has eloped with the teacher at one of her schools."

"A young idea-shooter, eh?" said uncle Noll; "that's severe—uncommon: those who study grammar should look out for the accidence—eh?—an old joke—never mind—what! is it a regular conjunction?—all right?—eh?"

"I think it all wrong," said Peregrine; "but, as I have just said, I really am not sufficiently well informed upon the subject to come to any conclusion but one, which is, to have nothing more to do with the family: the father vulgar to excess; the mother even transcending the father; one daughter a saint, and the other a hoyden; one having eloped, and the other \_\_\_\_"

"—— No scandal about queen Elizabeth," interrupted uncle Oliver ; " I'm sorry young sober-sides should have started ; but the other—what d'ye call her, Dory—was left. I know the world, Peregrine,—know it well ; rely upon what I predict and prognosticate,—if this girl has committed what my poor old sister used to call a 'piccadilly,' Minton will cut her off with nothing, and her whole share will go to the sister,—I know it, my Perry—sure of it—eh ?—why not try your hand there ?

"How happy could I be with either,  
Were t' other dear charmer away !"

" My dear uncle," said Peregrine, looking sentimental, dignified, and almost indignant at the suggestion, " I thought you had known me better than to suppose my feelings so much under my command, or my principles so mercenary, that I should be able, upon the defection of the object of my hopes and wishes, to transfer my affections to another."

Hereabouts he became very much moved, and flourished his pocket-handkerchief in a way to excite the commiseration of his eccentric but really kind-hearted relation.

" Why, to be sure," said Noll ; " if you come to *that*, I haven't a word to say. I never was married myself, and perhaps am not a fair judge : all I know is, money is money, and a woman is a woman,—and moreover, that sad or merry, tall or short, fat or lean, a woman with forty thousand pounds will make a better wife for a poor man than a woman with twenty :

"Take your wife as men buy plate,  
Not for the fashion but the weight,"

as the old joke goes."

" That may be good reasoning as far as the plate goes," said Peregrine.

" Hah ! hah ! " interrupted Noll—

"Plato, thou reasonest well,'—  
what ? "

" I assure you, sir," said Peregrine, " I am in earnest ; and my feelings with regard to the loss—the yet unaccountable loss—of this young lady are so strong, and I am sure will continue so, that, so far from attempting the sort of exchange at which you hint, I never shall be able to revisit the scenes of my for-

mer happiness, or associate upon terms of even friendly intercourse with the rest of her family."

"Oh!" said uncle Oliver, "you are a good fellow, and your heart is in the right place: then I suppose you mean to leave me—at least for a time."

"Why," said Bunce junior, "I confess, after the shock my feelings have received—I should—indeed I should, my dear uncle \_\_\_\_."

"Well, then," said Noll, "go—go—rely upon it, it's the best thing in the world to do—and as for the Mintons, why, you know, after this, I shall care nothing about them—no, not a bit—not a tittle; go \_\_\_\_."

"Yes," said Peregrine, who never made a move without a motion; "but, uncle, how *can* I go?—wheels won't work without anti-attrition—oil—something."

"I see, I see," said Noll, "you want a something to give the impetus!—what!—odd enough, as the joke goes, that a cheque is essential to your flight—hear, hear. I'll do that for you—I love to encourage matrimony; whether you are going I know not, I ask not—will a hundred do?"

Peregrine, who had pitched his highest flight at half the amount, looked doubtfully, but answered in the affirmative: the cheque-book was sent for—the cheque written—delivered to Peregrine—folded and lodged nearest his heart, *i.e.* in his pocket, and horses forthwith ordered to be ready in two hours.

Somebody, whose axioms upon matters of taste and fashion are universally recorded, is reported to have said that "through London" is the nearest road from any one part of England to another. As far as regarded Mr. Peregrine Bunce, the world was all before him; and driven out of his Twigglesford paradise, and without any settled plan of proceeding, it was quite natural he should fix upon the metropolis as his destination, at least in the first instance, however short might be his stay, or however soon he might take "a fresh departure."

In the season at which our hero—if anything so very unheroic may be so called—determined on proceeding to the modern Babylon, nothing certainly was likely to turn up to meet his wishes or suit his views. Still, after the serio-comic injunctions of Uncle Noll, the wary nephew was resolved to keep the one great object constantly in sight, and it is not quite out of the reach of the possible to imagine that *faute de mieux* he had even debated in his own mind the advantage of advertising in the newspapers for an agreeable help-meet with a for-

tune adequate to that of her humble servant, begging to be favoured with letters in reply, addressed to A. B. or X. Y. Z. at some post-office or circulating library convenient to his residence.

But no ; by a strange enough coincidence, he found, upon his arrival at his London lodgings, something which tended to give a direction to his movements ; and here it ought to be mentioned, that he kept and retained these lodgings in perpetuity, varying only his elevation,—that is to say, in the dull time of the year, Peregrine occupied the first floor of the house in which he had long been domiciled, but as the spring advanced, he followed the example of the mercury in the Torricellian tube, and mounted ; so that, when his obliging landlady could get more for the first floor than he thought it either fit or convenient to pay her for it, he ascended to the second,—a proof of considerable elasticity of mind, and a regard for the “main chance,” which does not ordinarily characterize men who have not seen more winters and summers than had passed over the head of our friend Peregrine.

The letter destined to be the guiding-star of his destiny came to him by the general post from Brighton, and contained a friendly invitation to that most enlivening watering-place. The missive was from a sincere old friend, who, although he could not offer him rooms in his house, entreated him to favour him and his wife with his society ; in order to induce him to do which, he mentioned that an extremely agreeable widow with a delightful daughter were staying with them. “She is,” said Mr. Dumbledore, “a widow, witty and wealthy—and, as for her daughter, her *naïveté* is charming—so come.”

The fisherman says—

“ When the wind is in the east  
‘Tis neither good for man nor beast ;  
But when it bloweth from the south,  
It blows the bait into the fishes’ mouth.”

And Peregrine felt quite delighted at this invitation from the southern coast, careless at the moment whether the elder or younger lady were eventually to turn out the object of his cares and devotions, inasmuch as, in addition to the sheer and actual disappointment of Margy Minton’s regular “throw over,” the delight which he should experience as a mere matter of revenge and triumph, in securing a better prize in that most hazardous

of all lotteries—matrimony—would be inexpressible ; and so he wrote a letter by return, although that which he found on his arrival had been lying at his lodgings for some days, announcing his intention of most gratefully availing himself of Mr. Dumbledore's kind invitation, and moreover begging him to direct one of his servants to secure a bedroom for him at one of the hotels in the neighbourhood—a precaution quite in keeping with Peregrine's notion of lightening the labour of feeding by being “near his work.”

And now, parenthetically, let us for a moment look at this Brighton, to which our friend Peregrine is going. Of all the wonders of England in the way of increase, both in extent and importance, nothing can equal it ;—from a mere cluster of fisherman's huts, it has become a splendid town,—thanks to the patronage of George the Fourth ! It is, in truth, a world of his creation ; and the notorious predominance of loyal and monarchical principles amongst its now numerous population, is a sufficient proof of the goodness of their memory, and the genuineness of their gratitude.

Brighton has one striking advantage over most other watering-places ; where there are no trees—the changes of seasons signify nothing, and the combination of sea and sunshine renders its chalky terraces and gravelled esplanades as gay in January as in June. This is no new remark, nor when it was first made did it apply to this now southern outwork of the metropolis ;—its increase of size, and the consequent increase in the size of its buildings, have totally altered its character ; and if they have not destroyed, completely changed the nature of its amusements, and the sociability and perhaps sociality of its society. A quarter of a century ago, with the exception of the Pavilion itself and one or two other mansions, there was scarcely a house in Brighton in which one could conveniently dine more than six or eight people —hence the snugness of its winter associations : *then* the old Steyne was the centre of attraction, the focus of all the folks to be found ; and nothing can more strongly mark the barbarism, which abandoning its neighbourhood as a residence was then considered, than the fact (remembered by sundry persons still extant), that when an elderly lady, kind, wealthy, fat, and hospitable, one day tumbled downstairs in her own house, and damaged some of her ribs, the remark of one of her dearest friends—dearest too because a constant guest at her dinner-table —was, “Serve her right, for living at such a distance from civilization as the *New Steyne*.”

Throwing associations much further back into matters of really important history, Brighton possesses an exceedingly deep interest, as being the point whence escaped that witty, unwise monarch, Charles the Second. No detailed account of that escape has ever appeared in print, except in a work written by a gentleman of the name of Parry, and published seven years ago, called an "Historical and Descriptive Account of the Coast of Sussex." At that period the manuscript had only recently come into the possession of the British Museum, and was not previously known to be in existence. Mr. Parry obtained a limited permission to publish it from the trustees; but we presume, as Mr. Parry has had seven years' enjoyment of the privilege, we may avail ourselves of it here, where it seems exceedingly apposite as a quotation, which we accordingly do, prefacing it with Mr. Parry's own words. "It may not be impertinent to add," says that gentleman, "in this captious age, that we insert this ancient record, as a curious article of history, which may now be read with the interest of a romance." It is the narrative of Colonel Gountre, of Rackton, in Sussex, who had the happiness to be instrumental in the business, as it was taken from his mouth by a person of worth, a little before his death—we give it as it was then given, in the first person, the account having, when formally reduced to writing, been transcribed in the third.

"The King," says Colonel Gountre, "was now at Heale, within three miles of Salisbury, where we begin our storie. My Lord Willmot, his faithful and watchful attendant at Salisburie; there Dr. Hinchman, now the Right Reverend Bishop of Salisbury (inspired by God himself, as well may be thought by the successe), gave him counsell; first to try att Lawrence Hydes, Esq., living at Hinton Dambray, in Hamshire, neere the sea-side, what could be done for a passage: then, if that did not succeed, to repaire to me at Rackton, fower miles from Chichester, in Sussex, being verie confident of my fidelitie, and that I would contribute to the utmost of my power to bring this great and weightie business, as for the difficulties they must encounter, soe for the consequence of conclusive to a good end.

"Here before I proceed, I hope the reader will give mee leave to put in mind that wee wryte not an ordinarie storie, where the reader engaged by noe other interest than curiositie, may soone bee clogged with circumstances which signify no more unto him, but that the author was att good leisure, and was very confident of his reader's patience. In the relation of miracles, every petty cir-

cumstance is materiall, and may affoard to the judicious reader matter of good speculation ; of such a miracle especiallie, where the restauration of noe less than three kingdoms, and the author's own particular libertie and safetie (of a good and faithful subject), was att the stake—I may not therefore omit to lett him knowe howe things stood with me at that tyme.

" Not above fourteene dayes before, I was confined, upon paine of imprisonment, not to stirre five miles from home—In the very nick of tyme when I was first thought upon for soe great a worke, comes a messenger with a warrant from the Commissioners of Haberdashers' Hall, London, to summon me to appear before them within ten days, to pay twoe hundred pounds for my fifth and twentieth part, which they had sett upon mee, upon peyne of sequestration upon default. I first refused, and told the messenger that I was confined, and could not goe five miles from home ; but he left me the order, and told me it should be att my perill if I did not obey it.

" The next day I repaired to Chichester, fower miles from me, to the Commissioners, to shew them my order ;—they peremptorily replied, I must goe, and my order would bear me out. I went accordingly and compounded with them, and gott off a hundred of the twoe hundred I was set att ; but my credit being shaken, the current then running soe hard against the King, the royal party, and all good men, that I could not borrowe the money all in London, I was forced with all speede to repaire into the country, and goe privally to my usurer, who had the security of my whole estates.—I showed him my danger, and requested to borrowe the money on my bond and former security ; who readily condescended, and told me out the money. The next day I was to call for it, and seale the bond. I had no sooner ended this busines, beeing stayed by some friends longer than I intended, butt that very night I came home (being October 7, 1651), I found some att my house whoe were come about their design. I think it will easily bee graunted by any that readeas and considers, that this was not without a Providence, since that it is apparent that if my friends had come before I was licensed to goe abroad, I must needes have been excused ; and, if they had come much after, it was possible a meer restraint might have come betweene, or my liberty in goeing soe freely up and downe, after my busines ended, more suspected.

" But now to the storie and entertainment of my guests.—Betwixt eight and nine of the clock at night, I came home ;

entering in at my doore my ladye mett me, and told me there was in the parlour a Deavonshire gentleman sent by Mr. Hyde aforesaid, about a reference which none besides myself could decide. At my comming in, I found my Deavonshire gentleman sitting att one end of the chimney, Captain Thomas Gounter at the other, and my lady (which was gone in before) in the middle. The gentleman rose and saluted me—I presently knewe him to be the Lord Wilmot; which the noble Lord perceiving, took me asyde to the windowe.

“ ‘I see you know me’ (said he), ‘doe not owne me.’

“ Captain Thomas Gounter, my kinsman, for all he had a long tyme beeene in the army, and under his command, knew him not; which was strange, the noble Lord beeing but meanly disguised.

“ After a bottle of sack, a short collation, which was made readie as soon as it could, my Lord’s man Swan, coming in to wayte, whispered his maister in the eare; and told him my Lord Wentworth’s boy Leonie was without, and wished him to be carefull for feare the boy should know him,—he having been taken by Captaine Thomas Gounter in distress at Chelsey, and cloathed by him to waite upon him.

“ Supper being ended, there was whispering between my kinsman and my lady, and shee told him shee was confident of a disguise, and that it was the M<sup>r</sup>. by his hand. He beate her off of it as much as he could, suspecting noe such matter himselfe. Within halfe an hower after supper, I offerred the noble Lord, then by name Mr. Barlowe, it being late, and as the greatest courtesie I could then shewe him, to waite upon him to his chamber, and to bedd; which hee readily accepted. I accordingly took up the candle, the noble Lord following mee, my lady and kinsman attending. When I came into the chamber, it beeing late, I desired my lady and kinsman to goe to bedd, and leave me; for I was bound to waite upon this gentleman awhyle. Theye tooke leave, and bidd him good-night.

“ My Lord and I beeing alone, he broke the business to mee, with these words, sighing—

“ ‘The King of England, my maister, your maister, and the maister of all good Englishmen, is neere you, and in great distresse—can you help us to a boate?’

“ Looking very sadly, after some pause, I said, ‘Is hee well? —is hee safe?’

“ He said, ‘Yeas.’

“ I replied, ‘God be blessed,’ and gave him a reason for my

question ; for if hee should not be secure, I doubted not but that I could secure him till a boate could be gotten.

“ The noble Lord, not knowing what had been done, and what course had been taken by Mr. Hyde, for securing his Majesty at Heale, answered me that hee hoped hee was out of danger at present, but intended to be at my house with me on the Wen’sday. Soe he said, and soe it seems it was resolved ; but second thoughts and unexpected accommodation elsewhere had altered the designe. However, upon the hearing of this, my thoughts were much raised in expectation of such a guest ; until I was better informed, as I was soone after, to my great content and satisfaction, knowing the house well, and the conveniences thereof, and the worth and fidelitie of the persons.

“ Now to the maine business of procuring a boate—I told my Lord seriously, and nothing but the trueth, that for all I lived soe neare the sea, yet was there noe man living soe little acquainted with these kind of men. However, as I thought my selfe bound by all obligations sacred and civile to doe my utmost to preserve my king, so I did faithfully promise with all care and alacritie, yea expedition (which I accounted to bee the life of such a business), to acquitt myself of my dutie.

“ The noble Lord, my honored friend (O that God had beene pleased to have spared him life), was abundantly satisfyed with this answer, hugging me in his armes and kissing my cheeke again and again. For that tyme I bid him good-night, desiring him to rest secure, for that I would watch whylest hee slept, and that I doubted not but in good tyme all would bee well.

“ Comming into my chamber I found my wyfe had stayed up for mee, and was very earnest to know whoe this was and what was his busines. I desired her to excuse me, assuring her it was nothing concerning her, or that would any wayes damnify her. Shee was confident there was more in it than soe, and enough she doubted to ruine me and all my family, and ‘ in that,’ sayed shee, ‘ I am concerned,’ breaking out into a very great passion of weeping, which I seeing tooke a candle, pretending to goe into the next room, but privately to my Lord Willmot, and acquainted him how it was, asking his advice whether, as the case stood, it were any way amisse to acquaint her with it ; that I durst passe my worde for the loyaltie and integritie of my wife, but, however, without his allowance shee should knowe nothing.

“ My Lord replied, ‘ No, no, by all meanes acquaint her with it.’ I humbly thanked him, and badd him good-night againe.

I comming into my chamber then unfolded the busines, wyped the teares of my ladys eyes, who smiling said, ‘Goe on and prosper—yet I feare you will hard'y doe it.’ ‘However,’ said I, ‘I must endeavour and will doe n.y best, leaving the success to God Almighty,’ my lady deporting herself during the whole carriage of the busines with soe much discretion, courage, and fidelitie, that (without vanitie bee it spoken) shee seemed (her danger considered) to outgoe her sexe; neyther will the reader thinck this an impertinent circumstance, since the successe of the busines did not a little depend upon her concurrence.

“Contenting myself with very little sleepe that night, I rose very early the next morning, beeing Wednesday, the 8th of October, as I had promised the Lord Willmot, and rode to Elmsworth, a place twoe miles from him and by the seaside, passing through Boome. I tooke an old man, a servant of myne formerly, John Day, and trustie man and very loyall subject whoe was related to seamen of very good accoumpt, whoe with their barkes used to lye there; but they being out of the way could doe no good there, although fower yeares after I did, att the same place, att my own charges, hire a barke for the Lord Wilmot, who came over att his majesties command, and losing his designe was forced to come from almost the farthest north to the south before hee could gett a passage; soe few friends had then his sacred majestie in his distresses, now soe numerous in expectation of rewards.

“I hasted all I could home again to give my Lord accoumpt, who had promised not to stirre till I came; but being impatient of any delay, he had left my house, so that I met him within halfe a mile of it, and gave him accoumpt of my mornings walke, that othing could be done where I had beene. The noble Lord and I ridde on and went to Langstone, a place by the sea, and where boates are. As he was riding along, hee put his hand in his pocket and missed his money; for coming away in hast from my house he had left it behinde on the bedd. Immediately I sent my man Swan for it. My wyfe hearing that my Lord was gone, which she much wondered att, had beene in his chamber and found in the middle of it a black purse full of gold, which she had secured, and gave it the man when hee came for it.

“When he came to Langstone we attempted all we could, but in vaine. The noble Lord and I eate oisters there, and then we parted: the Lord to Mr. Hyde’s house aforesaid, there to expect the accoumpt of my proceedings. I then came home

and immediately employed my kinsman, Captain Thomas Gounter (whoe by this had been made acquainted), to inquire of several other places, and to meet me next day att Chichester, to give me accoumpt, all which I imparted that night to my Lord Wilmot, att Mr. Hyde's house att Hinton Daubney aforesaid. After supper I tooke my leave of the Lord, it being a very dismal night for wind and raine, which made the Lord very much to importune me to stay; but I refused, replying that delays were dangerous, and lett the weather be what it would, I had a sure guide.

" I touched at my owne house by the way betwixt one and twoe of the clock that night, and layd down upon my bedd, and after two houres rest, rose from bedd and went immediately to Chichester to meete my kinsman Thomas Gounter (9th of October) according to appointment, from whome I received this accoumpt, that both he and his kinsman, Mr. William Rishton, a loyall gentleman and one engag'd all along in the warre under my command, had endeavoured all they could, but without success. Then I bethought myself and conceived the next and best expedient would be to treat with a French merchant, one that usually traded into France, and went to one Mr. Francis Mancell, a stranger then to me and only known unto me by face, as casually I had met him with severall other companies, pretending to give him a visit, and to bee better acquainted with him. He received me courteously and entertained mee with a bottle or twoe of his French wine and Spanish tobacco.

" After a whyle I broke the busines to him, saying, ' I doe not only come to visite you, but must request one favour of you.' He replied, ' Anything in his power.' Then I asked him if he could fraught a barke; for, said I, ' I have twoe speciall friends of myne that have been engaged in a duell, and there is mischief done, and I am obliged to gett them off if I can.' Hee doubted not but that att such a place as Brighthemston in Sussex, he could. I prest him then to go with me immediately, and if he could effect the busines I would give him fifty poundes for his paynes; but it being Stowe fair day there, and his partner out of the way, hee could not possibly untill the next day, and then hee promised me faithfully hee would goe with mee and do his best. Soe accordingly wee agreed.

" Then I who had promised to the noble Lord Wilmot an accoumpt att Mr. Hyde's house aforesaid, once in twelve or twenty-four houres att farthest, repayred thyther accordingly, and told him all that was done. The noble Lord approved and

liked my proceedings well. It being very late and very darke I borrowed a horse of my kinsman, Mr. Hide, whoe lent him his faulkeners horse, being as it seemes the best he then had, which served to carrie him home, and the next morning to Chichester.

“ I tooke my own house in my waye, and rested upon a bedd for a whyle, and went unto Chichester, the 10th of October being Fryday, according to former appointment. The merchant being destitute of a horse, I horst him upon the horse borrowed of Mr. Hyde, and borrowed one for myself of my kinsman, Captaine Thomas Gounter, and went away accordingly, desiring my kinsman to repaire unto my Lord Wilmot, and to give him the accoumpt of my departure from Chichester, in further prosecution of the busines, and to remaine with him in order to his commands during my absence. The merchant went immediately to inquire, but the seaman he chiefly depended upon was gone for Chichester, whoe had bargained for a fraught there; but as providence would have it, hee touched at Shoram, fower miles from Brighthemston. I perswaded the merchant to send to him immediately, to come to him upon earnest busines, and I doubted not but he would come, which tooke effect accordingly. I had agreed with the merchant to treat with the boatman, being his affair and trade; I to sett by as newter, promising the merchant to make good, and to pay him whateuer hee should agree for, but withall desired to gett it as lowe as he could. We stayed there that night, and by Saturday, the 11th of October, by twoe of the clock made a perfect agreement, which was, that he was to have sixty pounds paid him in hand before hee tooke them into the boate, for he would know what hee should carrie, or he would not treate. Soe that the merchant was forced to lett him, himselfe knowing no more than what I had said to him of the twoe friends, &c. Hee was to be in readiness upon an houres warning, and the merchant to stay there under pretence of fraughting his barke, to see all things in readiness against I and my twoe friends arrived. For I knew not when I should come, but privately promised the merchant to defray all his charges over and above the fifty pounds as aforesaid for his paines, which was afterwards accordingly done; but this fifty and the sixty poundes paid to the boateman, the King himselfe, before he went away, tooke order for, and his order was executed.

“ All things agreed upon, I took leave of the merchant about 3 of the clock, to give my Lord Willmot this accoumpt, and

came to Mr. Hyde's house aforesaid, between eight and nine in the night, but my Lord and my kinsman were removed to a tenant's of my cousin Hydes, one Mr. Browne, and one that had married my cousin Gounter's sister; but coming into my cousin Hyde's house aforesaid, found there my cousin Hyde and Colonel Robert Phillips, in his chamber, goeing to bedd, whoe was very inquisitive to know how things stood. I gave, in short, that all things were well and in readiness, upon which Colonel Phillips replied, 'Thou shalt be a saint in my almanack for ever.'

" Mr. Hyde was very earnest to have me stay all night, and goe and give account the morrow morning; butt I desired to be excused for that I knew I was expected, and could not in honour but my account without delay. Whereupon Colonel Phillips would go with me, and we took leave of my cousin Hyde for that night, and went where my Lord Willmot was, and had earnestly expected me—after I had saluted him, and gave him a full account of all proceedings, the noble Lord was infinitely pleased and satisfied, and presently had it in consultation who should goe to the King; and it was agreed that Colonel Phillips should, by reason that I was much tyred out, and would neede rest for further employmet.

" Soe Colonel Phillipps, upon Sunday the 12th of October, went to give the King an accoumpt, and to conduct him to the Lord Wilmot and to me. In the interim whylest they expected upon Munday the 13th of October, the Lord Wilmot and I and Captain Gounter beeing altogether at dinner, agreed to ride out upon the Downes. I for a blinde went to Hambledon, hard by, to give my sister a visitt, and there borrowed a brace of greyhounds, for that my cousin Gounter and other gentlemen were on the Downes, and hadd a mind to have a course att a haire, and 'twas possible if they did not beat too farre, and should stay out late, that they might all come and bee merry with her that nyghte; however, she should be sure of her dogges. 'If you do, you shall be heartily welcome,' was her answer.

" I brought the greyhounds, and beat with my Lord and my cousin, until my tyme served, and then left them, resolving to ride on, till I mett the King; and just as I came to Warneford's town ende, from old Winchester, I mett Colonel Phillipps, conducting the King—being neere the houses, I ridde by them, and took no notice—went into an inne in the towne, called for some beare, and tooke a pipe, and stayed soe long that they were a topp old Winchester before I overtook them. When I had overtaken them, and done my dutie to his Majestie, I

directed them the safest way, and I would ride before to find out my Lord Willmott ; which beeing done, we all came together. The King and my Lord had some private discourse together.

“ When we came to Brawde Half-penny, a little above Hambledon, the King spake to mee, ‘ Canst thou gett mee a lodging hereabouts ? ’ I told him—I told him that my cozin Hyde’s house aforesaid was taken up for him, and was very convenient, beeing neere and in the way : but whether his Majestie thought it too publick a place, or for what other reason I know not, hee said, ‘ Knowe you noe other ? ’—‘ Yea, may it please your Majestie, I know divers where for a night wee may bee welcome, and heere is one who married my sister, whose house stands privately and out of the way.’

“ ‘ Let us go thither,’ said the King.

“ Whylest we were consulting this affaire, Captain Thomas Gounter, my kinsman, and Swan, ridd scouting about Broad Half-penny aforesaid ; I conducting the King, my Lord Willmot, and Colonel Phillipps, to my sister’s house, a private way and the backside of Hambledon, it beeing but half a myle from the place aforesaid.

“ Alighting at the doore I led them in, the Lord Willmot following ; the King putting Colonel Robert Phillipps before him, saying, ‘ Thou lookest the most like a gentleman now.’ Comming in, my sister mett him—we all saluted her—she brought us into a little parlour whcre there was a good fire—this was about candle-light—wine, ale, and bisketts were presently sett before us, with a very cheerfull countenance, as though the King’s presence had had some secret influence upon her, whoe suspected nothing lesse than that a king was present.

“ In an hour’s space we went to supper, beeing all seett promiscuously att a round table ; and having halfe supt, in comes my sister’s husband, Mr. Thomas Symones, whoe, as it plainly appeared, had beeene in company that day.

“ ‘ This is brave,’ said he ; ‘ a man can noc sooner be out of the way, but his house must be taken up with I know not whome ;’ and, looking in my face, ‘ Is it you ? ’ said he, ‘ you are welcome : and as your friends, so they are all.’

“ Passing round the table, and viewing all the company, hee said, ‘ These are all Hyds now ;’ but peeping in the King’s face, said of him, ‘ Herc’s a roundhead,’ and, addressing his speech to mee, said, ‘ I never knewe you keepe Roundhead’s company before.’

"To which I replied, 'No matter—he is *my* friend, and I will assure you, noe dangerous man.'

"Att which words he clapt himself downe in a chaire next the King, and saying, 'Brother Roundhead, for his sake, thou art welcome ; all the whyle believing the king to be so indeede, and making himself (whether for feare or in courtesie) to bee one too as he could act it. The King all the whyle complying with him to all our admirations. Now and then he would sweare before he was aware ; for which the King reproved him—' Oh deare brother, that is a scape ; swear not, I beseech you.' Nevertheless, in that humour hee was, hee plyed us hard with strong waters and beare, the King not knowing well how to avoid it, but as somebody or other when he lookt asyde would take it out of his hand.

"Supper beeing ended, it being tenn of the clock, I began to bethink myself that the King had ridd neere fourty miles that day, and was to undergoe a very hard journey for the next ; and how to gett the King out of his company, and to bedd, I could hardly devise. So at last I whispered my kinsman in the eare, saying, 'I wonder how thou shouldest judge soe right—he is a roundhead indeede, and iff we could gett him to bedd, the house were your owne, and we could be merry.' He readily submitted, and I presently (leaving the Lord Willmott behinde) conducted the King and Colonel Robert Phillipps (who lay in the King's chamber) to bedd.

"The King slept well all night, and by breake of day I, putting up twoe neats' tongues in my pockets, what I thought we might neede by the way, we sett out and began our journey. We were no sooner come to Arundell Hill, as we rode close by the castle, but the Governour Captain Morley mett us full butt—hunting. I, the better to avoid them, presently alighted, it beeing a steepe hill we were to goe downe, and my company (as was agreed before) did as I did ; and soe happily we escaped them. The King beeing told who it was, replyed merrily, 'I did not like his starched mouchates.'

"Soe we came to Howton, where, on horseback, we made a stopp att an alehouse for some bread and drinck : and there our neats' tongues stood us in very good stead—and were heartily eaten. From thence, being come to Bramber, we found the streetes full of soldiers on both sides the houses, who, unluckilie and unknowne to mee, were come thither the night before, to guard. We luckily (or rather by a verie speciaill providence) were just come from their guardes at Bramber-bridge, into the

towne, for refreshment. We came upon them unawares, and were seene before we suspected anything. My Lord Willmot was ready to turne back, when I stept in and said 'If we doe wee are undone; let us go on boldly, and wee shall not be suspected.' 'He saith well,' said the King. I went before, hee followed, and soe passed through without any hindrance.

"It was nowe betweene three and fower of the clock in the afternoone. We went on; but had not gone farre, but a new terror pursued us—the same soldiers came riding after us as fast as they could. Whereupon the King gave me a 'hem,' and I slacked my pace till they were come up to mee; and by that tyme the soldiers were come, whoe rudely passed by us (beeing in a narrow lane), soe that we could hardly keep our saddles for them, but passed by, without any further hurt; being some thirty or forty in number.

"When we were come to Beeding, a little village where I had provided treatment for the King (one Mr. Bagshall's house), hee was earnest that his Majestie should stay there awhyle till he had viewed the coast: but my Lord Willmot would by noe meanes, for fear of those soldiers, but carried the King out of the road I know not whither.—Soe we parted—they where they thought safest; I to Brightlemston, beeing agreed they should send to mee when fixed anywhere and ready.

"Being come to the said Brightlemston, I found all clear there; and the inne (the George) free from all strangers att that tyme. Having taken the best roome in the house and bespoken my supper, as I was entertaining myself with a glass of wine, the King, not finding accommodation elsewhere, was come to the inne. Then up comes mine hoast (one Smith by name), 'More guests,' saith he.

"He brought them into another roome, I taking no notice. It was not long before, drawing towards the King's room, I heard the King's voice, saying aloud to my Lord Willmot, 'Herc, Mr. Barlowe, I drink to you.'

"I know that name,' said I to my hoast, 'I pray enquire whether he were not a Major in the King's army;' which done he was found to be the man I expected, and presently was invited, as was likely, to the fellowship of a glass of wine. From that I proceeded and made a motion to joynе companie, and because my chambre was largest, that they would make use of mine, which was accepted, and soe we became one compagnie again.

"At supper the King was cheerful, not shewing the least

syne of feare or apprehension of any daunger, neyther then nor att any tyme during the whole course of this busines, which is noe small wonder, considering that the very thought of his ennemis, soe great, and soe many, soe diligent, and so much interested in his ruine, was enough, as long as he was within their reach, and as it were in the very middest of them, to have daunted the stoutest courage in the worlde. As if God had opened his eyes, as he did Elisha's servant at his master's request, and he had seene a heavenly hoast round about him to guard him, which to *us* was invisible, whoe, therefore, though much encouraged by his undauntedness and the assurance of soe good and glorious a cause ; yet were not without secret terrore, and thought every minute a month till we should see his sacred person out of their reach.

" Supper ended, the King stood his back against the fyre, leaning over a chaire, up comes mine hoast (upon some jealousie, I guess not any certain knowledge) but up comes him who called himself Gaius, runs to the king, catcheth his hand, and kissing it, said, ' It shall not be said but I have kissed the best man's hand in England.' He had waited at table at supper where the boate-men alone sat with us, and were then present—whether he had feare, or heard any thing that could give him any occasion of suspicion, I knowe not. In very deede the King had a hard taske, soe to carry himself, majestie being soe naturell unto him that even when hee said nothing, didd nothing, his very lookes (if a man observed) were enough to betray him. It was admirable to see the King (as though he had not been concerned in those wordes which might have sounded in the eares of another man as the sentence of death) turn about in silence without any alteration of countenance, or taking notice of what had been said.

" About a quarter of an hour after the King went into his chamber, where I followed him, and craved his pardon, with earnest protestation, that I was innocent, soe altogether ignorant of the cause how this had happened.

" ' Peace, peace, Colonel,' said the King ; ' the fellow knows mee, and I know him ; he was one (whether soe or not I knowe not, but soe the King thought att the tyme), that belonged to the back staires to my father—I hope he is an honest fellow.'

" After this I began to treate with the boatman (Tellersfield by name), asking him in what readiness he was. He answered he could not of that night, because for more securitie he had brought his vessell into a brooke, and the tyde had forsaken it,

soe that it was on ground. It is observable that all the whyle this busines had beeene in agitation to this very tyme, the wind had been contrarie. The King then opening the windowe tooke notice that the wind was turned, and told the master of the shipp ; wherefore, because of the wind and a cleer night, I offered ten pounds more to the man to gett off that night ; but that could not bee ; however we agreed that he should take in his company that night, but it was a great busines we had in hand, and God would have us to know soe, both by the difficultes that offered themselves and by his help he afforded to remoove them.

“ When we thought we had agreed, the boatman starts back and sayeth, ‘ No, unless I will ensure his barke : ’ argue it we did with him, how unreasonable it was, being so well paid ; but to no purpose, so at last I yielded, and two hundred pounds was his valuation, which was agreed upon. But then, as though resolved to frustrate all by unreasonable demands, he required my bond : att which, mooved with much indignation, I began to be as resolute as he, saying amongst other things, ‘ There were more boates to be had besydes his ; if *he* would not, another should ; ’ and made as though I would go to another. In this contest the King happily interposed, ‘ He saith right,’ said his Majestie ; ‘ a gentleman’s word, especially before witnesses, is as good as his bond.’ At last the man’s stomach came down, and carrie them he would, whatever became of it ; and before he would be taken he would be run under water. Soe it was agreed that about twoe in the morning they should be aboard.

“ The boateman in the mean tyme went to provide for necessaries, and I persuaded the King to take some rest ; he did in his cloathes, and my Lord Wilmot with him, till towards twoe of the morning. Then I called them up, showing how the tyme went by my watch. Horses being ledl by the back way towards the beech we came to the boate and found all ready ; so I tooke my leave, craving his Majesties pardon if anything had happened through error, not want of will or loyaltie. How willingly I would have waited farther but for my family being many which would want me, and I hoped his Majestie would not, not doubting but in a very little tyme he shold be where he would. My only request to his Majestie was that he would conceal his instruments wherein their preservation was soe much concerned. His Majestie promised noebody should knoe. I abided there, keeping the horses in a readiness in case anything unexpected had happened.

"At 8 of the clock I saw them on sayle; and it was the afternoone before they were out of syght. The wind (O Providence) held very good, till the next morning to ten of the clock brought them to a place in Normandie called Facham (Feschamp). They were no sooner landed but the winde turned and a violent storne did arise, in soe much that the boateman was forced to cutte his cable, lost his anchor to save his boate, for which he required of mee eight pounds, and had it. The boate was back again by Friday to take her fragt."

As Mr. Parry, from whose work we extract this extremely interesting narrative, says, "it forms a link in the history of the escapes of Charles the Second, and falsifies in a remarkable degree the recorded and accepted histories of his Majesty's last escape. In Mr. Heneage Jesse's exceedingly able and valuable history of the Stuarts we have one incident at Brighton related as we have it here—touching the kissing of the king's hand; and some very curious and touching details as regards the king's position when on board the vessel, and the well-known jest of the smoker who puffed the fumes of the weed in the monarch's face: but this narrative seems to invalidate altogether the truth of the historical part of the inscription on "Tattershall's" tombstone at Brighton, and moreover the claim of that person to such extraordinary praise for his courage and fidelity, inasmuch as Colonel Gountre in his narrative shows that he was an extortioner and a shuffler; and nobody shows that he had any notion it was the king till long after he had made his hard bargain with him and his friends: neither does the king appear to us, under all these circumstances; and having seen with his own eyes, as people say (as if he could have seen with any other), the dogred venality and imposition of the shipper, the king was justly liable to have the "boate" moored reproachfully under his nose at Whitehall. How as having been afterwards rated as a fifth rate in the navy, she got there, is not our business to inquire, but it certainly reminds us of a question asked by one of the greatest —ay, the greatest dramatic geniuses of this or any other country —who not understanding French, having been told that Monsieur Tel had shot himself in his *bureau*, said, with an anxiety whlich pervaded her magnified countenance, "In his bureau! great heaven! how gat he there?" The perfect English scholar affixing to the word *bureau* no signification but that of the top of a chest of drawers.

Now Tetersell, as he is called on the tombstone, and his deeds are thus described thereon:

## “P. M. S.

Captain Nicholas Tettersell, through whose prudence, valour, and loyalty, Charles II., King of England, after he had escaped the sword of his merciless rebels, and his forces received a fatal overthrow at Worcester, September 3, 1651, was faithfully preserved and conveyed to France, departed this life the 26th day July, 1674.”

Upon this, and a long poetical epitaph so mutilated as to be read with great difficulty, we find a note appended to page 120, under the head “Sussex,” in the 14th volume of the “*Beauties of England and Wales*,” in these words :—

“It appears that Charles, after his defeat, wandered over the country, and at last found an asylum at the house of a Mr. Mansell, at Ovingdean, near Brighton. During his concealment there, his friends agreed with one Tattersell, who was master of a coal brig, to convey him across the Channel. The night before his departure, he passed at the George Inn, West Street (now known as the King’s Charles’s Head), kept by a man named Smith, who soon recognized his royal guest, but had had too much loyalty to betray him. Next morning, Oct. 15, he embarked, and landed the same day at Fescamp, in Normandy, &c. &c.”

Mr. Lee, in his “*History of Brighton*,” adopts this version, but Ovingdean is to the left of Rottingdean, and beyond Brighton. Now Colonel Gounter’s valuable narrative puts it beyond doubt that Brighton was the terminus of the king’s journey, but—and here is the only possible chance of reconciling the contradiction—it is quite possible, that Lord Willmot did, when he left Colonel Gounter at Beeding, take the king with him out of the road, “he knew not whither,” and carry him circuitously to Mr. Mansell’s at Ovingdean, and so came back in the evening into Brighton from that village; but then, instead of finding an asylum at Mr. Mansell’s for many days, as the statement implies, the period of his stay there could not have exceeded a few hours. Still the supposition that his Majesty was taken thither by Lord Willmot, is the only one by which we can account for the statement, but which, if true, seems oddly enough omitted as a matter of history from Colonel Gounter’s very minute detail.

Well! having brought this interesting digression to an end,—and exceedingly interesting it is,—*revenons à nos moutons* (rather an appropriate summons to the South-downs), and look after a much less important personage than those of whom we

have been treating,—our own Peregrine, who, we are sure, will not be ungrateful to us for investing with any new interest the field of his future performances, or peregrinations, in the love-making or rather match-making line.

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## CHAPTER VIII.

PEREGRINE's journey to Brighton was a progress fuller of mystification than his last—although not his first—undertaking. He was off on a sort, if not of a wild-goose chase, at least of blind-man's buff; and in the outset of the enterprise, not the least check to his ardour was the recollection of his departure from Minton's, and of the smiles of the spider-brushers from the laundry window; not to speak of the doubt as to which was to be the point of attack—the widow or the maid; nevertheless, his resolution having been taken, away he went.

That he was of a somewhat economical turn, we have already seen. So, calculating deliberately upon his outlayings and “setting forth,” and remembering that he was to be housed at one of the Brighton inns for the nights, he resolved to leave his servant on board wages in London, and betake himself alone in that best of all possible conveyances, “the Times” coach,—coach not to be more respected for its steadiness and well-regulated rapidity of motion, than esteemed for the beauty of sundry inside female passengers, who in his driving days patronized the appropriately named Goodman, as the ladies of other times encouraged Tom Tug—

“The jolly young waterman,  
— who ne'er was in want of a fair.”

Away went Peregrine; and thus doubting, thus cogitating upon his prospects and proceedings, it was not until he had received the *accolade* from his friend Dumbledore on his threshold at Brighton, that he was fully aware of the precise nature of the temptation which had been held out to him matrimonially, being up to that moment lost in doubt whether the lady or the daughter, who were staying with him, was *the* object: but one minute after his arrival served to satisfy him; inasmuch as the

caughter made her appearance somewhat unexpectedly by half-slipping and half-tumbling down a precipitous flight of stairs, at the head of which was a door leading apparently to another suite of rooms, whence she emerged, and found her level on the mat in the hall (as the passage was called) at the bottom of them, exhibiting her small and delicate person to the least possible advantage, mystified by a sort of equivocal drapery, worn by conkey-riding misses at watering-places, and by their "Ma's" at picnics, &c., but which in ordinary society settles the question as regards the character of ladies, as decidedly as smoking a cigar in the street, or sitting with his elbow out of a carriage-window, concludes that of a gentleman.

Lucetta Mimminy, who thus presented herself in the first instance to Peregrine's attention in so curious a manner, he felt assured could not be the "hinted at" prize; therefore Mamma, with her jointure and the important interest in the fortune of her darling, at whose death, before her own, all the property to which she was the expectant heiress, was really and positively to return and revert, must be the "creature" to be specially attended to.

Peregrine had some odd prejudices about widows; but still he was not to be beaten off without a little probation, which would moreover involve a fortnight or three weeks' entertainment at Dumbledore's expense—bating the bed; nevertheless he was a little startled, because he had made up his mind to a wife, to be made for himself—a thing of his own training.

Dumbledore was perhaps one of the most unqualified blockheads that ever existed—

"Nonsense came mended from his tongue."

His great delight was "quoting"—in what language mattered not—for understanding none, he took sound for sense, and, generally speaking, no sense served him best; but he was good-natured, and in some points not very dissimilar from Minton; he was not a justice, and nobody would have taken him for a judge.

Mrs. Dumbledore was a sort of amateur appraiser (or as we see now over the doors of appraisers, &c., the term changed to "valuer"); she never mentioned anything without fixing a price upon it, as if she were calculating for a deodand; so that between the two, Peregrine might hope to gather some amusement, even supposing that the "widow" did not suit his book; not that she herself was without her merits in the

way of character—speaking of character neither religiously, morally, nor socially, but as affording matter of observation for Peregrine, whose “Old Head” had somewhere about it the bumps of “observativeness,” or some such word, which enabled him to form as just an estimate of the mental qualities of others, as had been previously formed of his own.

Mrs. Mimminy was the young widow of an old gentleman, who departed this world some short time after the appearance in it of the dear Lucetta, whose rapid descent to the feet of her intended future father-in-law seemed to afford an ominous encouragement for his advances to her lady mother. Now Mrs. Mimminy was what is called a timid woman—terrified at everything—afraid of the sea, of a river—of a frog—of a pig—of a blue fly, and utterly unable to sleep alone since the death of Mr. Mimminy, who was far advanced in years when he undertook to marry her; and the prosperous state of whose pecuniary affairs had enabled him to settle upon her two thousand five hundred pounds a year; leaving her a capital house, wines, plate, carriages, horses, cows, asses, pictures, and all other imaginable things, during her life,—and somewhere about a hundred thousand pounds in money—regular hard cash in the funds—to the young squallidity who, papered up in trousers, had made the slide down the “Montagnes Russes” of a Brighton house, which slide might have spared Peregrine a great deal of trouble and anxiety, if it had proved as serious as it probably would have done, had she not pitched upon her head.

“ You’ve hurt yourself, dear,” said Dumbledore, picking up the amalgamation of bread-and-butter.

“ No,” said poor Lucetta Mimminy, “ not much hurt,” and upstairs again she ran, certainly not at the same pace at which she came down.

“ That, I presume, is the daughter of the handsome widow,” said Peregrine to Dumbledore.

“ Hit it—that’s she,” said Dumbledore,—“tumbly, bumbly, eh! my boy?”

This was funny—but Peregrine’s eye was quick—as the memorable joke goes of that excellent actor Wewitzer, who was in early life a contemporary of Garrick. Bannister, who was Garrick’s pupil, said one day that such an eye as Davy’s (as they called him) never was beheld—it could “pierce through a deal board.” “That’s no compliment,” said Wewitzer; “for it must have been a gimlet eye.” Peregrine’s eye might have been sometimes a bore, but upon this occasion he felt a certain degree

of repulse,—as we have just said a widow was not exactly what he wanted—but still—and how common it is in the world, that when one first arrives at any place, however subsequently pleasant, a man feels *géné*, awkward, and ill at his ease, unless he be indeed a magnate who can do things that no minor man may—say things that no minor man dare say; smoke pipes in drawing-rooms, and make his host an object of ridicule to his own visitors. As Dollalolla, when she hears Glumdalca mention the fact, that of a hundred thousand giants who own her sway, “one hundred of them are wedded to herself,”—exclaims, “O blest prerogative of giantism!” so may the ordinary creatures of the world exclaim, as to the blest prerogative of something which perhaps it would not be decorous to mention, but which gives the power to be perfectly at ease, without entirely leaving those who admire the power equally comfortable.

“Come, come, Peregrine,”—said Dumbledore, “close your peregrinations—that’s not bad—come to Brighton, of course—dull before—our Sussex coast will be successful to you—never mind the sea-weeds—see weeds upstairs—the widow—charming woman—creature *per se*—don’t *you* see?—I mean by the sea-side—that’s it.”

“I see it all,” said Peregrine; “but where am I to be lodged?”

“Not Lodge’s Peerage—not on the pier,” said Dumbledore; “no—that’s wrong—Old Ship—good place—snug bed—that’s my way—but come up and see Mrs. D.—D by the side of the sea—that’s not so bad—I’m as droll as ever—never mind—you say ‘Carpe diem’—carp’s a fish as won’t live—I don’t care—come up and look at the ladies. Mrs. Mimminy is a sweet creature—quite worthy attention—sits looking at the ocean, thinking of her late husband—‘stands all day like Dido with the window in her hand’—gerundic—don’t speak. Di, do, dum—”

“But I am not fit to be presented.”

“Poeta nascitur, non fit”—that’s it, eh?—you are no poet—not nasty—and quite fit—ha, ha, ha!”

“Really,” said Peregrine, “I would rather go and change my dress, and—”

“No—don’t be foolish,” said Dumbledore, “make a shift with the shirt you have on—ha, ha, ha!—that’s not bad—we dine at six—halfpast five now.”

“Then I had better go to my roost,” said Peregrine, “and come back to dinner.”

"Roost," said Dumbledore, "you may—you'll find no perch there, eh?—don't be later or you'll lose your sole—that's the way I go on—just as usual—ha, ha, ha!"

"I will be punctual," said Peregrine.

"Do," said Dumbledore. "Punctuality is by no means a 'sine qua non,'—it must be attended to—consider the cook—there's the point—it's what I call in my way 'the nemo mortarium omnibus horis'—don't you see?"

And so Peregrine proceeded to the Old Ship, preceded by a wheelbarrow, on which was his luggage, much after the fashion of the *long* lamented Lord Lovat, whose trunk was carried away before his head. And what an excellent bit of naïveté was that of the landlady at Nottingham, where the hoary rebel was refreshed on his journey to London, on his way to be tried. The lord, who was of gigantic stature, in going into the hostelry, struck his forehead against the top of the doorway. Stung by the sharpness of the blow, he uttered an oath, unseemly in these polished days, and fulminated his anger against the lowness of the entrance.

"Don't swear, my lord," said the landlady; "the lowness of *my* door will never offend you again—when you next travel down this road to Scotland, your Lordship will be a head shorter."

If Peregrine felt his ardour damped—at first by the peculiar circumstances of the case, it was more particularly subdued by the never-failing spirits and unquenchable absurdity of Dumbledore, whose perfect happiness, self-satisfaction, and inexhaustible mirth, were enough to drive an ordinary man into melancholy madness. Of course he as yet knew nothing of the widow; but hearing of her gentleness and timidity, it struck him that sentiment must be *her* line, and this feeling was strengthened by the history of her looking out of the window, and thinking of him whom she called, as Dumbledore told him while they were walking towards the Ship, "her dear old Billy;" but then he knew that any attempt to be serious in the presence of Dumbledore would be unavailing. What he looked to, financially, was the delicate appearance of Lucetta, the child, impressed on his mind by the brief anatomical survey he had of her person upon what Mr. Dumbledore would no doubt have called "the stare-case," and while Peregrine was dressing, and before he had seen the principal, as the widow might be called, he began calculating upon the precarious health of the daughter—the practicability of insurances upon her life, and

the assiduous attentions of a medical friend of his, a physician in small practice, who might probably, as he fancied, be induced to, second his views, in taking away a creature so young and innocent,—

“——from a world like this.”

Brighton (where, if there *are* any trees, they never do—what naughty boys are told to do—turn over a new leaf) was just getting agreeable when Peregrine arrived there ; the fine figure-showing breezes were just setting in, coevally with a sort of snuggling sociability amongst those who have anything like sociability in them, and moreover a general acquaintance with those likely to be sociable ; and when Peregrine, enveloped in his cloak, beat up stoutly against the south-west breeze in the dusk towards Dumbledore's house, he felt his energies awaken, his imagination expand, and was confident that, let Mrs. Mimminy be what she might, having what she had, he would win her.

He reached the house—knocked at the door—after some time it was opened—whack it went against the wall—the hall-lantern swung like a monkey on a wire—bang went the dining-parlour door—smack went a glass door which was meant to break the force of the wind, but which was itself broken in the attempt—the stair-carpet heaved like the billows of the sea—and the portal whence Lucetta had suddenly emancipated herself before dinner, flew open by the force of a draught from a small window beyond it. The servant at last contrived to shut what is called the street-door, the success of which effort involved the immediate extinction of our swinging friend, the lamp in the passage, and a loud cry was raised for somebody to illuminate the way which Peregrine was to follow—all these being the concomitant comforts of such mansions, to which ladies and gentlemen, with good houses and establishments of their own, betake themselves for health and pleasure.

At length, Peregrine reached the elastic floor of the drawing-room, upon which the gentlest pressure of the foot makes shakery all over the lower part of the house ; for Dumbledore had neither, as we know, a mansion at Kemp Town, which, relatively to old Brighton, stands something in the same degree as does Hammersmith to Hyde Park Corner—nor in Brunswick Terrace—nor in—but stop, there must be a check in confidence of all kinds, when it is not mutual—the locality must remain secret for the sake of the architect, if not of other parties con-

cerned—suffice it to say, that the house faced the sea, as all houses at Brighton worth living in do; but it had been built before substantiality was considered essential to Brighton residences, and although Mr. Dumbledore's mansion was not a particularly solid one, he never could have said, with his mode of expression and turn of mind, that "it was no great shakes."—Quoting from the mental *vade mecum* of dear Dumbledore—our readers may perhaps explain to the unenlightened the true meaning of that quaint but to ourselves inexplicable phrase—and which never could have been applied to his Marina.

Peregrine was presented by Mrs. Dumbledore to Mrs. Mimmamy, with a form and ceremony still observed in that blissful medium of society in which these worthies moved; and, as was her wont, the widow lost not a moment in exhibiting to the new visitor, her tender fears and delicate apprehensions.

"You did not come by the stage-coach, Mr. Bumps?" said the lady—so she called him in her trepidation.

"Bunce," said Dumbledore, "is my friend's name, Mrs. Mimmamy. Bumps is, under the free-knowledgy system, English for brains."

"I beg your pardon, Mr. Bunce," said the widow; who was, oh! so pretty—so nice, and white, and pink, with large bright blue grey eyes, and a charming figure, and a foot and ankle that would have made—whom we will not say, downright jealous—and so very *naïve* withal—as we have already heard.

"But what a dreadful thing a stage-coach must be—the horrid noise—the horses—and the whip—and the conversation—isn't it terrible?"

"No," said Peregrine, "I didn't find it so—I am a poor man;"—and he bowed somewhat significantly to the rich woman;—"if I could put four post-horses to my carriage, I might like it better; but as it is, I think it a good mode of travelling."

"Oh, I am so timid," said Mrs. Mimmamy,—"you would hardly believe it. One night my dear child Lucetta—don't poke, dear—Lucetta and I were sleeping—where was it, dear?"

"Do you mean, Ma, at the Blue \_\_\_\_?"

"No, no, my angel," interrupted the lady,—"at no Blue anything—at Salt Hill. We had been to see her cousin Ferdinand at Eton. Lucetta always sleeps, dear thing, in the same room with me—and a dreadful kind of animal—a sort of gnat, or something of that kind, got into the room, and I was obliged to ring for my maid, to get rid of it. The idea of being left alone in a room with a gnat would kill me!"

"Yes," said Lucetta, "and don't you remember when Major O'Callaghan used to dine with you, and I went to bed at nine o'clock, how terrified you were afterwards at a black beetle?"

"Yes, my dear," said Mrs. Mimminy, "Major O'Callaghan is one of your trustees, and I am sure, after talking over business upon such subjects one naturally gets more nervous than before."

"Well," said Mrs. Dumbledore, "I am not in the least frightened at anything. I remember a maid I had—I gave her forty guineas a year, besides lots of dresses and all that—and some horrible insect, not worth a halfpenny in a museum, came in, burnt itself in one of the candles—best wax—when Muntingly, my maid, tried to kill it, and broke a glass that cost Mr. Dumbledore two-and-thirty pounds, without the frame, which he bought at Swaby's, and gave him eight guineas for it, besides four pounds ten, which it cost for new gilding."

Peregrine, whose acquaintance with Mrs. Dumbledore was but slight, was not slow in perceiving *her* peculiarity. That which he discovered in Mrs. Mimminy pleased him more—timidity was one of his favourite attributes of the "female sex," and the form, and frame, and voice, and countenance, of the widow, seemed all to contribute to justify and render particularly interesting, her tender fears and delicate apprehensions; and by the time dinner was over, and the ladies had retired, the aspirant, whose susceptibility was unquestionable, had worked himself up into a belief that she was a very charming person; although, as he anticipated, all his efforts at sympathy, and an expressive community of feeling with her, had been completely marred by the perpetual jokes of his host, and the peals of laughter with which he naturally favoured them.

However, in the *tête-à-tête* with Dumbledore, which succeeded the departure of the fair ones from table, Peregrine was amply repaid for any little annoyances which he had previously met with; for the more his host explained of the character and property of the lady, the more his sudden prepossession became confirmed.

"Bless your heart," said Dumbledore, "she is a treasure—many a man has been courting her—don't you see, like Madam Blaise—

"The king himself has followed her,  
Whene'er she went before."

Nice woman—so delicate; notice her foot—beautiful; only

think of being stepfather to little Lucy, with a foot like that—you'd soon get the length of it—eh?—Lucetta—thin—very thin—just like a needle—deuced sharp—with an eye and a point, don't you mind?"

"I mind nothing," said Peregrine, "only really now you are too bad; the things you said at dinner, society scarcely permits; the ——"

"Eh?—what?—the Dublin tender,—I understand you, ha! ha! ha! they like it, if they understand it, and if they don't, it does no harm,—ha! ha! ha! I saw you were vexed at my joke about the tumble of Lucetta, the that in præsenti and that, but, ha! ha! ha! poor little thing—a pair of compasses in calico,—not the Legs Taglionis, as I say—ha! ha! ha!"

"But now, really," said Peregrine, helping himself to a bumper of claret, the sight of which would have killed his Margy; "I do feel a deep interest in that widow."

"Ah!" said Dumbledore; "interest,—at what rate? I look to the principal. I declare if Mrs. Dumbledore was no more, and no more a Dumbledore, I should delight in being ditto to Mr. Mimminy,—respectable elderly gentleman—poor fellow he married—and died—and she, with her sentimental turn, timid, and all that, laments him with decency, but,—I'm sure—eh?—pass the wine."

"Stop, my dear fellow," said Peregrine; "I never can get you to be serious: has she a mind?"

"Yes," said Dumbledore; "a strong mind: a great mind ——"

"Has she?" said Peregrine, who had seen no very powerful evidence of her intellectuality.

"Yes, yes," said Dumbledore; "a great mind to be married again, ha! ha! ha!"

"But," said Peregrine; you know her disposition and character—she is amiable, kind, and——"

"Find that out yourself," said Dumbledore; "as for person she is charming—eh?—fine bust—eh?—'Tityre tu patulæ,' and all that; as Virgil says—uncommon nice—thrown away upon old Billy, as she calls him,—never was a 'Billy do,' as the French have it—quite the reverse; not sweet, eh?—he was old, she was not,—there she is, quite a 'novus homo,'—beautiful prize, ha! ha! ha! ha!"

"But, my dear friend," said Peregrine; "you speak so loud; in these houses everything can be heard; and even your recom-

mendations, if they reached her ears, might injure my efforts to gain her affections."

"Not a bit, not a bit," said Dumbledore; "I think somehow that the young thing has been what I call put up to her own importance; Lucetta, or Lucy, as they call her; 'Clara Luce,' don't you see? light weight, do you comprehend? and she has great power over her mother: she went to a school; but there they taught her everything but what she ought to have learned; so Ma means to have her all to herself, with a governess at home."

"A prudent proposition," said Peregrine: "however, we ought to join the ladies."

"Not a bit of it yet," said Dumbledore; "fill your glass—drink to the widow; and I'll add, may she not be one long: she deserves a good husband; she is one of those tender things that like ivy would trail on the ground all her life unless she had something to support her, and then she'd grow and flourish uncommon. Never think of ivy, without recollecting Jim Vinnicombe, an old friend of mine, in the soap line in the City: set up his carriage—didn't trouble the Heralds for arms, but clapt his cypher on his coach panels. 'Gad,' said one of his friends, 'why do you come out in an old coach?' 'Old?' says Vinny (we always called him Vinny), 'it's a new coach.' 'Is it?' said his friend, 'why it's green, and covered with I. V. all over.' Ha! ha! ha! don't you see,—I. V.,—Ivy,—ha! ha! ha!—"

"Very droll, indeed," said Peregrine; "upon my word, Dumbledore, you sometimes remind me very much of my worthy uncle. But—if I could but get you for one minute to be serious."

"I never *am* serious," said Dumbledore; "never in what the French called the '*Tears état.*' Can't cry, any more than the man who didn't cry turnips when his father died—"

"I know," said Peregrine, determined not to hear the exceedingly old paradox.

"I dare say you do," said Dumbledore; "but you never heard my clever charades. Oh! I am a bit of a poet, if you did but know it; nothing stops me: just listen to my charades; never wrote but two—on the roots,—eh?—not square roots, as you'll see. Somebody called upon me to write charades, one upon a carrot, and the other upon a parsnip. What do you think I did? Quick as lightning—as the telegraph at the railroad that sends a message two hundred thousand miles in a minute, out I pulls my pencil, and writes this for 'carrot':—

“ ‘ In triumphs my first is most commonly found,  
     In many old houses my second :  
     My whole is long, spiral, red, tufted, and round,  
         And with beef very excellent reckoned.’

Ha! ha! ha!—don’t you see,—car-rot,—but now for parsnip,—wasn’t to be beat,—so at him again—

“ ‘ My first for age hath great repute,  
     My second is a tailor ;  
     My whole is like the other root,  
         Only a little paler.’

Ha! ha! ha!—don’t you see,—par-snip,—not so bad for me—ha! ha! ha!”

Peregrine laughed,—whether *with* or *at* his host is a question to be decided by others,—but he laughed against the grain, as the saying goes, because his whole mind was fixed upon the widow.

“ Really we ought to go upstairs,” said Peregrine.

“ They haven’t sent for us,” said Dumbledore; “ and my wife is angry if we go up before they send a message, from the Lords, as I call the ladies. I know who you are hankering after—the widow, the duck in weeds,—eh?—‘ Dux nobis opus est,’—that’s it,—however, her weeds have diminished; she has reduced the sign of sorrow to a black riband round her waist—eh?—

“ ‘ Give me but what that riband bound,  
     Take all the rest the sun goes round.’

Can’t say sun—here—it’s a daughter.”

“ That child looks ill,” said Peregrine (whose “ wish was father to the thought”)—“ seems consumptive.”

“ Her appetite is consumptive, as I know,” said Dumbledore; “ ha! ha! ha!”

“ She appears sick,” said Bunce.

“ All the effect of bringing up,” said Dumbledore; “ ha! ha! ha! ‘ Si sick omnes,’ ha! ha! ha!”

“ And the whole of the fortune reverts to the mother in case of her death,” said Peregrine, filling another glass of claret, and looking sufficiently serious, as he hoped to bring Dumbledore to something like matter of fact.

“ I have told you so already,” said Dumbledore.

“ An odd arrangement,” said Peregrine.

“ A very amiable one,” said Dumbledore; “ he secures his

daughter's fortune ; but if she dies, her mother is to have it ; what can be better ?—and the mother has another hold upon the child, the granting which is strikingly complimentary,—she must marry with her consent, or not at all."

"Yes, but she is too young to think of marrying for years to come," said Peregrine.

"I don't know," said Dumbledore ; "when they begin to think of it,—that's another affair,—but I remember a Major once marrying a minor, and—"

"Tea and coffee are ready, sir," said a servant entering the room.

"We are coming," replied the interrupted joker ; "non sine Te possum vivere."

"Yes, sir," said the servant—bowed—retired—and shut the door.

"Upon my life, Dumbledore," said Peregrine, "I am not a man at all likely to be knocked over at a blow,—not of a disposition to be killed by the *coup de soleil* of a pair of bright eyes, but I must say I never saw a more prepossessing person than this widow ; she is very nice—"

"More nice than wise," said Dumbledore ; "not that I mean it, only it's a sort of a joke ; I have given you the opportunity, and if you can't spell it, and put it together, I can't help it ; you'll have plenty of opportunities ; my old woman don't walk ; she takes her drive after luncheon ; but Mrs. Mimminy likes what the newspapers genteelly call pedestrian exercise, only she is so dreadfully frightened at every animal except one, that she cannot trust herself without a man to take care of her,—you'll have plenty of opportunities of making your play, and I think you will suit."

To this dictum Peregrine silently, and to himself satisfactorily, assented ; but in order to carry his point at as early a period as possible, he again pressed upon Dumbledore the absolute necessity of a "move" towards the regions in which the fairest daughters of Eve were congregated : to which proposition, Dumbledore, having concluded his "downstairs" libations with a glass of overpowering brown sherry, acceded ; and accordingly they repaired to the drawing-room.

## CHAPTER IX.

PEREGRINE, when he joined the ladies, was received by Mrs. Dumbledore with one of those gentle reproaches which she meant to be complimentary, and Mrs. Mimminy contracted her ruby lips and rolled her large and sparkling eyes in a manner calculated to make him believe that his appearance had been anxiously expected. Lucetta stood by her mother's knee and looked at him with a fixed attention; for, having been present during the whole period in which his merits personal and mental had been discussed by the senior ladies, she was anxious to test his qualities according to *her* judgment by *their* estimate. Whatever hereditary talent Miss Mimminy might have derived from her father, it is certain that

“She had her mother's eyes,”

and, as it appeared to Peregrine, a surprising proficiency (for her age) in the art of using them.

Peregrine, by way of making conversation till his host arrived (for Dumbledore was a man with a cellaret and a key, and locked up the heels of to-day's bottles to serve for to-morrow's luncheon), inquired whether the ladies had been out during the morning.

“Yes,” said Mrs. Dumbledore; “Mrs. Mimminy, and I, and dear Lucetta, had a drive in our pony phaeton—a very nice little carriage,—Dumbledore got it, I think a bargain, a hundred and thirty guineas—without the harness to be sure; and the horses—charming match—gentle as lambs—only a hundred and ten pounds the pair—exceedingly reasonable;—then our coachman is quite a duck in his way,—five-and-forty pounds, two liveries, and a great-coat a year,—can't be a better,—finds his own boots,—and is as fond of the animals as if they were his own.”

“Oh but Mrs. Dumbledore,” said Mrs. Mimminy, “you talk of those horses being quiet,—dear me, I thought I should have died to-day—one of them put up his ears like horns at the braying of that dreadful donkey, and the other whisked his tail and made a horrid noise,—I was very near jumping out, only Lucetta held me,—that dear child has the courage of a hero.”

“I've no fear,” said Mrs. Dumbledore; “I don't like acci-

dents, because they are sure to cost something ; but as for myself——”

“ You are past all price,” said Dumbledore, swaggering into the room ; “ what are you talking about ? ”

“ Of my dreadful timidity,” said the widow.

“ Oh ! ” said Dumbledore ; “ there it is,—it’s constitutional,—it’s your nature to be afraid—‘ *feræ naturæ*,’—eh ? ”

“ Exactly,” said the lady ; “ I assure you, yesterday I was so terrified at my dear little Bobby, the sweetest canary-bird imaginable, that I thought I should have died : what had happened I cannot imagine ; but I had ventured to give it a little bit of sugar with my fingers, inadvertently, to be sure ; but all at once it opened its beak dreadfully—like an eagle—and fluttered its wings in the most surprising way. I dropped the sugar and flew to the bell, and rang for my maid ; but, whatever it was, the agitation had quite subsided when she came, and the bird has been tranquil ever since ; but the idea of being bitten by a mad canary-bird ! ”

“ Why you’d have gone whistling about the world all the rest of your life, Mrs. Mimmminy,” said Dumbledore ; “ an ‘ *avis au public*,’ as the French say.”

“ Do you remember my Cocky ? ” said Mrs. Dumbledore ; “ a favourite parrot Mr. D. bought me,—gave nine guineas for it, besides three pounds fifteen for the cage,—he would talk, talk, from morning till night.”

“ Yes, ‘ *semper paratus*,’ ha ! ha ! ha ! ” said Dumbledore ; “ well I must say that pets are plagues ; one gets fond of them, and then they die ; my notion is that a pet is a regular *sine quâ non*,—there’s no necessity for it at all.—What liqueur do you take after your coffee, Mrs. Mimmminy ? Curaçoa—Maraschino,—and some remarkably old rum from my own estates in the West Indies,—made in my father’s time,—turn everything to account,—sugar first, rum afterwards,—two commodities from one stem,—as Virgil says, ‘ *rumque cano*.’ ”

Mrs. Mimmminy, tremblingly took a minute sip of the Maraschino, and permitted Lucetta, who never took her eyes off Peregrine, to taste of the glass which she had sweetened.

Peregrine was not long in making up his mind as to the calibre of his companions. Dumbledore’s absurdities, and inveterate perseverance in them, were, as he knew before, quite striking enough to be amusing ; but Mrs. Dumbledore, who evidently was fully qualified for the degree of Doctor of L.S.D., and Mrs. Mimmminy, were rather below his mark. Lucetta’s extreme youth put her altogether out of the question, but there were germs of

grace and beauty about her person, and an intellectuality about the expression of her countenance, which struck Peregrine, perhaps the more forcibly, as the budding Venus seemed exceedingly prepossessed in his favour. If he could have shut her up for a few years to grow "unseen," he would have waited his time; but neither could he immure her after that fashion, nor, according to uncle Noll's doctrine, could he afford the procrastination; it was with Noll, as Dumbledore would have said, "*nunki aut nunquam*," so Peregrine entered into conversation with his host at the fire-place, whence he could command a full, perfect, and uninterrupted view of the widow.

"Well, we had a fine harvest, that's one thing," said Dumbledore; "nothing like that; give the people enough to eat, *cornucopia*, as I say, plenty of corn, and things will go well; all that speechifying of our great radical leader last week will go for nothing if you can but fill their stomachs,—he is a cunning chap, long-headed, quite the *Fox populi*, as I say; but I would advise the people not to be deceived by him,—he's no friend of theirs: I'd have them treat him comme il faut,—as if he was an enemy."

"He is a good sort of man in private life," said Peregrine; "moral, religious——"

"Oh yes," said Dumbledore; "very religious,—always at prayers,—toujours *pray*, as the French have it."

"My dear love," said Mrs. Dumbledore, "do shut the other door; the wind is enough to blow one away."

"I'll do it, dear," said Dumbledore; "de *gustibus non*,—I hate wind."

"See, Mr. D.," almost screamed the lady; "look how the lamp is swinging; recollect, it cost eighteen guineas and a half."

"I do see," said Dumbledore, hastening to exclude the tempest; "hanging lamp; the *pendente lite*, as I call it, is not good in windy weather."

To give what might be called a *verbatim* report of the conversation of the evening would be to tire the reader, although it has often occurred to the writer that nothing would be more curious, or more incredible, than such a report of any conversation which occurs in ordinary good society. Swift's imaginary sketches of polite conversation would unquestionably be beaten hollow by the reality: although the coarseness and indelicacy which characterize those, and so vividly bring to view the style and manners of the time at which they were written, are gone and vanished "quite entirely," the nonsense and absurdity still remain in the

full vigour of their inanity. If all the common-places of Mrs. Dumbledore and Mrs. Mimminy; all the little *naïvetés* of Lucetta (by far the most interesting); all the jumble of Dumbledore's eternal gabble, and all the gentle affirmative replies of Peregrine, during the first evening of his domestication, were set forth and set down, they would occupy half a volume; and yet in nine houses out of ten in Brighton on the same evening, the chances are that one should have heard very little better; because, although the level upon which the words run may be higher in some circles than in others, the ideas are much upon an equality; the difference of position and circumstances gives them a different form of utterance; and to be sure, a more extensive knowledge of generally good society affords a greater interest to the subjects under discussion. Perhaps, however, upon the whole, persons who talk of the great world speculatively, and live upon their doubts and mistakes, believe the most incredible things, and wonder how people can say *that*, which they never uttered, and do *that*, which they have never thought of doing, are, in point of fact, happier than those who know the real truth, which never purely reaches the debaters of ordinary society.

There can be no doubt that the heat and excitement with which politics are discussed after dinner amongst such persons, well-educated, well-informed, wealthy, worthy, and honourable people as they are, are extremely satisfactory to themselves; but it must be confessed, that happening sometimes to know a fact which we dare not state, but which affords us the knowledge that the ground upon which the party in which we are, are arguing till they are half black in their faces, does not exist; that the circumstances which they are discussing neither have occurred nor ever can occur; the appearance of the earnestness of some, the fervent asseverations of others as to their intimate knowledge of the subject; the figures which the debaters cut is somewhat ludicrous,—but then why deprive the Englishman of his liberty of speech?—he pays taxes willingly, that he may inveigh against them after dinner,—ministers are his property, he contributes to maintain them, and consequently feels that he has a right to abuse them, which he does, or defends them, as the case may be, with about as much *fond* for his arguments or knowledge of his subject as the gentleman possessed, who, meeting Mr. Pitt in the street one day, asked him if there was any news in town, and to whom Mr. Pitt replied, “that he really couldn't say, for he hadn't seen the newspaper.”

When it was considered time for Peregrine to take his de-

parture (which, however, was not until something very like supper on a tray had been perpetrated, and Dumbledore had refreshed himself with much spirituous liquor, judiciously diluted, and had delighted himself and Lucetta by spelling brandy in French (O. D. V.), in three letters, and in English also in three (B. R. and Y.), "his custom always in the afternoon;"—nor till he had induced his newly-arrived guest to participate in his libations), Dumbledore insisted on "marshalling him" the way he had to go, and seeing him in safety to the door of his caravansera. In vain did Peregrine remonstrate against taking him out at so late an hour—he was resolved; and they accordingly quitted the domicile of the Dumbledores together. Peregrine shook hands with Mrs. Dumbledore; Mrs. Mimminy timidly put forth her delicate little hand to be shaken; and Lucetta drew her fingers across her lips as she looked up into Peregrine's face. Peregrine looked at *her*, feeling himself very much puzzled by the action she had used, but eventually resolved that she was too old to be kissed as a child. Whether *she* thought she was still privileged by youth to "a chaste salute," it is impossible to say; nor had it been yet possible for Peregrine to ascertain her exact standing in life. He therefore shook hands with *her*; and, like Bassanio—

"So they parted."

As soon as Dumbledore and his guest were on outside of the house, Dumbledore pulled out of his pocket a case of cigars, and a bit of *amadou*, by means of which he lighted one of his comforters, and offered another to Peregrine, who declined.

"Don't smoke?" said Dumbledore; "—odd *that*—healthy pleasure—by the sea-side nothing like the weed—smoke it—chew it too—mum to Mrs. D—, never have it in the house—no tobacco near the women—as I say, 'Ne quid nigh miss'—eh?—out here it does one good—but I say, talking of weeds, what d'ye think of the widow?"

This was a question! and as it was quite clear to the prudent Peregrine that his friend had been imbibing more spirituous liquor than he had deemed it advisable to indulge himself with, in the presence of the ladies, he thought it was an exceedingly apt and fitting time to treat it cautiously and cleverly.

"I think," said Peregrine, "she is exceedingly handsome—apparently very good-natured—rather nervous —"

"That's all finery," said Dumbledore,—"don't mind *that*.

I think she is a hit—a palpable hit: why she can't be much turned of thirty—the girl, as she says, is not fifteen, and she married quite young. I forget exactly what is her age; don't think I ever heard; but I know she was quite of the pinafore and bread-and-butter school, when she became Mrs. Mimminy. Mimminy's money, I suppose, turned the scale. Her father was in the army—there were six or seven of them—Mimminy was a cross old fellow, and I believe broke the girl's spirit—however, she is getting better of it."

"How long has he been dead?" said Peregrine.

"Somewhere about four or five years, I think," answered Dumbledore.

"Well," said Peregrine, "she hasn't been in any very great hurry to marry again."

"No, no," said Dumbledore; "—I believe she has had lots of offers—no end to her money—personals and all that—dotes upon her daughter—sent her to school—odd fancy—got bad notions in her head—had her home again; going to have her taught under her own eye—best masters and a governess—better plan—*my* wife has vast power over her—great influence—capital match, Bunce, '*pari passu*,' as I say—for an enterprising man—and as for Mrs. D., rely upon her friendship.—Sally never changes—what she was, she is; and what she is, she will be—'che, *Sara; Sara*, as I say—Ha! ha! ha!"

"I don't think," said Peregrine, "that the girl looks very healthy—too intellectual."

"Why," said Dumbledore, "she is; but she is wonderfully improving in health. To be sure she presented herself to you in the first instance oddly; but she *is* clever: if she dies, then, you know what I told you."

"I see," said Peregrine; "however, I hope you don't think me mercenary enough to look to such contingencies."

"Fine creature as to mind," said Dumbledore; "very expressive eye,—eh?—‘*Bows yew*’—as the archers say—all I mean to hint is, that I think the concern worth looking after—but it's getting late—oh! here we are—what! door shut? bless me!—later than I thought—never mind—here goes!"—saying which, Dumbledore pulled lustily at the night-bell of the Ship.—"Only think—we have arrived—‘post *tot*,’—too late for a glass after my cigar—nobody answers. Pull again—eh?—I don't think it rung—no—‘*In bello quies*,’ as I say—ha! ha! ha!—not a bit of it—yes, yes; here comes somebody—so good bye—breakfast at nine—don't be late. I shall walk fast back,

—the night's coldish, and standing here in the draught has given me what the French call ‘*a shiver de freeze*.’—Ha! ha! ha!—Good bye”—and away went Dumbledore whistling one way, while the wind came whistling another; while Peregrine mounted to his room, full of thought and calculation; for, to say truth, Mrs. Mimminy was an exceedingly pretty person.

It may seem almost a work of supererogation to cast our thoughts retrospectively on Twigglesford; and yet, short as has been our acquaintance with the MINTONS, they may have excited some little interest. Peregrine, while tossing and tumbling in his bed, listening to the heavy fall of the surf on the shore before his windows, and the grating drag of the slippery shingle struggling with the curling waves, could not think of his present position without reflecting on *that* whence he had been so recently ejected. He could not shut his eyes to the conviction, that DORY and MARGY were infinitely more agreeable people than Mrs. Mimminy; nor could he disguise from himself the superior advantages, looking at the world as *he* did, derivable from marrying a young unsophisticated creature, in opposition to putting up with a ready-formed mind, prejudices derived from a previous husband, and a child who, whatever her own intrinsic merits might be, was, in point of fact, the obstacle intervening between him and that for which he meant to marry.

Poor MARGY—we may as well tell the history—*had* run away with JOSEPH GROUT: his piety and devotion had completely alienated her heart and feelings from the grosser sensualities of superior life, and they were married—but not by MR. SLOBBERTON MAWKS, whose rapid departure from Twigglesford, although by a “curious coincidence” it took place on the day of MARGY’s flight, was in no degree connected with the “untoward event,” but was occasioned by some inquiries after him, made on account of certain juvenile indiscretions, a development of which would have rendered his stay at his cure something incurable: so, leaving his page and his pet behind, he retired from Twigglesford; not, however, without taking care that his debts, small as they were, in the place, should be satisfactorily settled; and was, at least up to the termination of the present narrative, never heard of again. MINTON took the page into his service, and the sheep was turned out to grass. Nobody had the heart to kill it; nobody had the courage to eat it: so great was the respect of the saintly part of the population for the Reverend Slobberton MAWKS’s ram.

It is probable that in the chapter of accidents, of which life is

composed, we may fall in with Margy—perhaps Dory; but if we do, it will be much more for Peregrine's comfort if he do not. And yet, such is the force of habit, association, and juxtaposition, that Peregrine could not think of Twigglesford without a sigh of regret—it might have been accompanied with a blush of shame; but he burnt no light at night, and if he had burnt one, he was, like most of his fellow-creatures, the last to see his own faults.

Those who know at what an early hour the "watch-work," as it were, of Brighton, is in motion, must be sure that Peregrine could not have slept late or long. As for the incidental thumpings and bumpings of people at inns, who have neither nerves nor notions of civilization, who over your head, on either side of you, under you—it matters not in what direction—stump and bang about, and ring bells, cord up trunks, pull on boots, cough—whistle even, and make all manner of unseemly noises, at a time at which nobody who has not some most particular business ever thinks of moving, or being moved,—these one must compound for; but when at Brighton, in addition to all these exceedingly agreeable characteristics of inn-living, one hears the screams and yells of men, women, and children selling fish, donkey-boys trotting their braying steeds, loaded with little health-getting bumpers in poke bonnets and trimmed trousers—butchers' carts capering about—milk—prawns—matches—stay-laces—books, prints, and almanacks—all hawking abroad by seven o'clock, because it is so healthy to be up early—not to speak of the loud conversations of boatmen and fishermen, intertalked with by their wives and their delighted little curly-headed babes—puffs of wind, showers of dust rattling against the windows, and the dash of the surf grating on one's ears; the hope of rest, after it has been determined by the bathers, bakers, butchers, nursery-maids, fly-men, and donkey-drivers, that it is time to be out and about, was in Peregrine's locality perfectly vain. So, being, upon his favourite economical plan, "servantless," he rang his bell, and forthwith prepared for uprising—perfectly certain that Dumbledore, who was "at home," would breakfast at least an hour or two later than he proposed to do; so that he, Peregrine, might peregrinate Brighton for at least two hours and a half before the cravings of nature had a chance of being satisfied at his hospitable board.

However, his stroll, after making himself smart, was a little enlivened by meeting the pretty Lucetta returning with her maid from bathing. He stopped, and spoke to her; indeed, she

ran towards him, and intercepted him. So, it being morning, and out in the open air, he made one of his dashes, and gave her a kiss ; upon which the maid said, “ La ! Miss Lucetta !”

Whereupon Peregrine cast his eyes upon the maid—who smiled even unto laughing—and Peregrine began to think.

“ Come, Miss, we must get home,” said the maid ; and so Lucetta obeyed, tripping along sylph-like, and looking back at Peregrine as she went her way.

Now there was something exceedingly odd in this meeting, and the feelings it excited. Peregrine was much prepossessed in favour of this pretty girl ; yet she it was who stood between him and his worldly views towards her mamma and her fortune ; and as Peregrine, when he once started, always hastened to his conclusion, and was perfectly sure that the widow would be *his*—if he chose it—he could not but feel a curious interest about her daughter. She was, in his mind, destined to be *his* daughter-in-law ; she would grow up into a charming companion for her mother, and then—and so he went on thinking till he found it agreeable to throw himself upon a bench on the Esplanade, which had been benevolently placed there amongst others by some excellent person, whose contributions to public comfort demand the public thanks ; and there he sat, and watched the waves rolling in, one over and after the other, all exactly alike, as those who care not for such things would think ; but which a mind given to musing can watch for hours, and see a change and difference in every one. That sea hath a mystic charm—a thousand thousand thoughts are mixed up in the one curling billow that falls. A man that is not moved by this ordinary work of nature, is not the man for me. Peregrine, with all his worldliness, was absorbed in his speculations on its beauties ; nor was it till Mr. Dumbledore’s blue-plush foot-man had hunted him out, and summoned him to breakfast, that he left the scene of his contemplations.

The routine of the ungraceful meal, at which the widow did not appear, having been gone through, Mrs. Dumbledore having detailed the exact price of the prawns and the whitings, the eggs, and all the Brighton etceteras, with a most laudable accuracy, the two “gentlemen” of the party took a stroll, proposing to return to luncheon, then to receive the commands of the ladies as to their subsequent proceedings for the day.

Peregrine’s circle of acquaintance was somewhat small ; and he was rather indebted to his companion’s knowledge “by sight” for the catalogue *raisonné* which he gave of the bowing pro-

menaders with whom they mingled, his anecdotes connected with them being invariably mistakes ; but whenever Peregrine was able to question or contradict any of his "undoubted histories," Dumbledore always referred him to his standing authority, the *Morning Post*—"Read it there sir—must be true—sure of my fact—*ex Post facto*—ha ! ha ! ha !"

Dumbledore persisted in his early prejudices in favour of the Steyne, the recollections of which before it had been cut in half, were fresh in his memory, and every day took an hour's turn at *Steynography*, as he called his walk upon it ; and it pleased him to point out the various places in which, when a boy, he had passed so many happy hours, to trace the site of old Marlborough House, to expatiate upon the amusements at Crawford's and Donaldson's—the glory of the races, with the Prince driving his team—and a thousand bygone gaieties, for all of which society has now become infinitely too polished.

Peregrine listened, and apparently with interest, to the eloquence of his companion, for Peregrine was too well bred to seem indifferent or inattentive to conversation addressed to himself ; but he heard not all that was said ; the widow was in his mind—and in his eye—if not already in his heart ; and the circumstance of her not coming to breakfast annoyed him, because if she had felt as *he* felt, she would not have missed the pleasure of an hour's "exchange of thought" and sentiment. He quite left out of his consideration the fact, that the widow was a good deal past thirty—in spite of Mr. Dumbledore's ordinary miscalculations as to her juvenility ;—and that with *her* complexion she did not think it either pleasant or prudent to sit with her face opposite a large window opening on to the bright shining sea, over which window there was neither veranda without, nor *medium* muslin curtain within.

At luncheon, with her bonnet and veil on, Mrs. Mimminy would no doubt be found feasting ravenously on a pair of prawns, picked with the whitest of fingers, encircled by the prettiest set of rings, tributes of regard for one—affection for another—friendship for a third—and so on. Every ring she wore had a story connected with it ; and she liked to have them noticed, because, although her diffidence wholly precluded the possibility of her saying anything on the subject, it gave her an opportunity of exercising her beautiful eyes, and blushing, which she did habitually, if spoken to—in a way to light up her countenance in the most captivating manner.

All this did happen, and Peregrine was exceedingly well

pleased with his new acquaintance, who, as they became more intimate, began to express her dread of him—she was sure he was satirical—he looked so—but, she added, that her dear little Lucetta told her she was certain that Mr. Bunce was very good-natured, and *very* good looking; all of which intelligence conveyed in *her* peculiar tone and manner, very much encouraged the hopes of the aspirant.

“Mrs. Mimminy,” said Dumbledore, “let me offer you some brawn—the first of the season, I’ll be sworn—made at our place in Oxfordshire—‘*Sus per coll,*’ as I call it—ha! ha! ha!—we don’t wait for winter.”

Mrs. Mimminy refused.

“A bit of duck? ‘*Dux nobis.*’—Ha! ha!”

Another negative.

“You eat nothing, my dear lady,” said the worthy host; “we shall have a long drive before dinner.”

“How do you and Mr. Bunce go?” asked the lady of the house.

“In *your* chaise—‘*chay vous.*’—Ha! ha! ha! Sarah,” said Dumbledore, “you can take the britska, and we’ll lead the way across the downs, where I love to hear the bleating of the sheep, the ‘*Ba relief,*’ as I call it. Ha! ha! ha!”

Mrs. Dumbledore never paid the slightest attention to her husband’s eccentricities. Mrs. Mimminy simpered, and Lucetta stared with astonishment at what she could by no possibility comprehend. His indefatigability in his peculiar science of perversion, was remarkable; nothing escaped him. As Peregrine was gallantly handing Mrs. Mimminy into the britska, her Cinderella-like slipper caught his eye; she saw the effect it produced—so did Dumbledore; and when he got Peregrine into the pony-chaise, the first thing he did was to rally him upon the stare of admiration which he gave upon beholding the symmetrical foot of the beautiful widow. “I saw you,” said Dumbledore; “sly dog! couldn’t take your eyes from her shoe—what I call the ‘*Pars pro to to.*’—Ha! ha! ha!”

It must be admitted that Peregrine would have much better enjoyed a different arrangement for the expedition; but the present regime was inevitable; for if Dumbledore had driven anybody in the “*chay vous,*” it must have been the widow, in which case Peregrine would have been left in the britska with Mrs. Dumbledore and Lucetta; but even *that* would have been more agreeable than a *tête-à-tête* with his friend.

However, in this world one cannot have everything his own

way ; and so, to make the best of that which was no very bad bargain after all, away went the party on their excursion, and at a certain pace too—at least if Mr. Dumbledore's quotation on their return was justified, who, when the carriage drew up to the door, nearly died of laughing, while he screamed out, “ How hot the nags are, Sarah !—‘ Calor sedit ossibus,’ as I say. Ha ! ha ! ha !”

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## CHAPTER X.

UNCLE NOLL, whom we left in his cocked-hat-box of a parlour, was not likely to rest quite at his ease as to the Minton matter, without discovering, or at least endeavouring to discover, something more of the history of the dispersion of that valuable and self-valued family,—the disappearance of the gentle Margy, and the abdication—to call it by its mildest name—of Peregrine ; but Uncle Noll, as has been before insinuated to the reader, was not altogether tethered to the confines of Minton's empire of Twigglesford. He made occasional excursions to London, was a regular attendant at his favourite club ; and when the gout retired, and his old friends were not compelled to judge “ ex pede Herculem,” the stout and jolly veteran was to be found at his post, laughing and quaffing, and relating, or rather recording, old jokes, much to the disparagement of his younger associates, who, with their figured waistcoats and pendent chains, exhibited their thread-paper bodies and hourglass waists much to his diversion and admiration.

That Margaret Minton was married to Joseph Grout, Noll had ascertained within three days after his nephew's departure, and ascertained, moreover, that the event was believed in the place to have been the result of something little short of a conspiracy, with which some of the parishioners believed Mr. Slobberton Mawks to be mixed up. How, Uncle Noll could not ascertain ; although he felt satisfied, himself, that Peregrine's original suspicions on the point were well founded. As far as we are concerned, as we have already stated, we believe he had not any share in the proceeding, nor any suspicion of its consequences. No matter at present for *that*. The decided fact was, that Margaret had become Mrs. Grout, which, to a family disposed to make the best of a bad bargain, and to turn up their eyes, and say,

"It's well it's no worse," was something. The Mintons, of course, paid no visit to old Oliver; and Oliver felt, after all that he had heard—and he had heard a good deal more than Peregrine had thought it necessary to tell him—not sorry to get to London, early as it was in the season.

As to what Minton's feelings or views, towards or with regard to his daughter and his hopeful son-in-law, were, Oliver Bunce did not remain long enough in the neighbourhood to ascertain. What Peregrine thought of his position, after he had been ten days at Brighton, the reader will best collect from the following letter, which he addressed to his uncle at the Tavistock Hotel, Covent Garden, whence the worthy old gentleman had written to him, apprizing him of his removal to London:—

"Brighton, Nov. —, 18—.

"MY DEAR UNCLE,—As I wrote to you, informing you of my kind friend Dumbledore's invitation before I started, I expected a letter from you; but I must say, not from London, for to say truth, I thought the gout had made you a prisoner for some time. I am exceedingly glad to find that I was mistaken, and that you are out and about again.

"I am exceedingly happy here. Everybody has his peculiarities, and Dumbledore has his—so has his wife hers; but these are mere nothings when the heart is in the right place; and certainly anything more kind or hospitable cannot exist than they both are.

"I surmise, by your account of the Mintons, and what you seem to think of the forgiveness of Margaret, that Miss Minton and Captain M'Larrup will soon be united—perhaps are so, before now. I am glad, upon the whole, that it *was* a break-up there, as far as I am concerned. Mrs. Mimminy, who is *the* widow under consideration, is charming; the timidity which is the predominant feature of her character, is quite attaching—her daughter, although delicate, is an exceedingly promising child, if one may call a girl of fourteen and a half (and they say she is no more), considerably forward in figure and appearance, a child. I think sometimes I see a hectic flush on her cheek, and that perhaps her intellect—for she is amazingly clever—is likely to wear out the body. Nothing I should more regret; because, even if her mother did eventually justify my expectations as to her good opinion of me, I am sure, my dear uncle, you know enough of me to be quite satisfied that I should be too proud,

and too happy, to fill the position of a father-in-law, with all kindness and affection.

"I have exerted the little influence which I may be supposed to have obtained over the bright-eyed widow in carrying one point, on which she did me the honour to consult me. She had at one time a notion of placing, or rather replacing, young Lucetta at a boarding-school.—I certainly think that plan a bad one; for, independently of inducing a vast number of idle and bad habits, speaking generally, I should be, supposing anything should result seriously from our acquaintance, better pleased to have Lucetta domesticated with *us*. The *naïve* conversation of a young creature like her is always a relief in domestic life; and, devoted as her mother is to her, and she to her mother, I am sure the arrangement would be most agreeable to all of us. In consequence of this opinion of mine, Mrs. Mimminy has made inquiries about a governess, with whom she has received the most excellent testimonials, and who is to be here next week.

"I know, my dear uncle, your advocacy of the 'pop' system, and your detestation of what you call the 'dilly dally, shilly shally' school of proceeding; but I cannot profit by your advice or your experience. Dumbledore, after dinner, flatters me that I am a favourite with the widow, and in *his* way advises me—his counsel founded upon some old and not exceedingly correct proverbs touching widowhood—to declare off-hand—to fall at her feet and show myself what he calls '*a knee suitor ultra*,' the result of which would be, that I should win her, and wear her;—but I do not think I have yet arrived at the proper point. I know you will laugh at me.

"However, if matters go on as they seem to be now progressing, it will not be long before I bring the affair to a conclusion. She is exceedingly sensitive, and very endearing; and if there are any little peculiarities in her character, I flatter myself I can correct them. I certainly had a prejudice as regards widows, but I think my new friend is an exception to the general rule; for although she seems to treasure the memory of the late Mr. Mimminy, she appears to do so rather as a matter of feeling than of taste.

"We are going to-morrow upon a little excursion along the coast, meaning to pass a day at Eastbourne, and one or two days at Hastings; and nothing, I think, affords better opportunities of furthering a scheme like mine, than these detached expeditions: they always give one opportunities of losing the main

body of friends, and making a *tête-à-tête* without any impropriety or occasion for remark. Therefore do not, my dear uncle, answer this, which I only send as a despatch of advice, until you hear from me again.

"I have, I think, every reason to congratulate myself upon the quite accidental circumstance of receiving Dumbledore's invitation exactly at the moment I did. I have escaped the snares of a pretending, assuming family: yes, my dear uncle, pretending and assuming in all its branches, and have fallen into a circle, the constitution of which seems calculated to insure my future happiness.

"Believe me, my dearest uncle,  
"Your affectionate nephew,  
"Peregrine Bunce."

Noll, when he received this announcement from his nephew, felt considerably pleased; for, as we have already ascertained, Noll was very desirous, not only of seeing him settled in the world before he shuffled off this mortal coil, but exceedingly anxious to contribute his share to the settlement. Whatever might have been the sly indiscretions—if slyness and indiscretion be compatible—of the elder gentleman; and that he had been somewhat lax, has already been more than insinuated—he was very particular in his views as regarded his nephew. There are several proverbs—English, Spanish, and French—not particularly delicate in their phraseology, which go to establish a propensity not only of mortals, but of evil spirits who shall be nameless, to add to a previous accumulation of wealth; and Oliver Bunce partook, in a strong and strange degree, of the diabolical inclination to which those proverbs refer. If, when he made his will, Peregrine were poor, poor he would leave him, or perhaps, to play upon the words, would leave him nothing; but if Peregrine, by address or talent, or anything except industry, which he had no mode of exerting, could secure a sum—a something considerable—something calculated to place him in the sphere in which his whimsical uncle thought he ought to move—then Noll would come down handsomely to make *that* which was already good, better; and so render his favourite Peregrine really and truly—as far as money and money's worth go—a gentleman.

It is far beyond our power, or even inclination, to attempt to account for what are colloquially called the "crotchets" which men get into their heads:—that Oliver Bunce had resolved to do nothing for Peregrine, unless he did something for himself,

is an unquestionable fact ; and there we leave it, to see how the affair works.

" I think," said Mrs. Mimminy, as she was promenading in front of Brunswick Terrace, on the pavement, being dreadfully alarmed at the idea of hitting her foot against a stone which might probably be found out of its due place in the gravel walk of the Esplanade—" I think you take an interest in me, and this dear little thing of mine,"—pointing to Lucetta, who was walking by her mother's side.

" Can you doubt it ? " said Peregrine.

" Why I can't say," said Mrs. Mimminy ; " but I have told you, I fancy you are so dreadfully satirical, that I hardly know when to think you are in earnest in your conversations with me."

" Whenever I praise your morals, charms, and accomplishments," said Peregrine, " I am serious."

" Well, I'm sure, Mr. Bunce," said Lucetta, " you are civil."

" There, my love ! " said the widow, pushing young Crinoline forward, " walk on first a little—I want to ask Mr. Bunce his opinion of *you*."

" Then, ma," said Lucetta, " if you won't let me hear his opinion of *you*, it's rather too hard not to let me hear his opinion of *me*."

" Don't be rude, Lucetta," said Mrs. Mimminy ; " you quite terrify me when you talk in that way. I am going to consult Mr. Bunce on a particular subject."

" Oh," said Lucetta, looking somewhat piqued at being snubbed before Bunce—" then I'll go in to luncheon." And, suiting the action to the word, she marched herself off towards Dumbledore's house ; Peregrine remarking, as she departed, that she appeared to have grown infinitely plumper than she was when he first arrived.

" I think," said Mrs. Mimminy, " as I was saying before that darling rude child interrupted us, that you do take an interest in us ; and although terribly alarmed at you, still I feel that you would give your advice sincerely if I asked it. Recollect, I am a widow—alone in the world with that girl ; because, as for poor dear Billy's trustees, and all that, *they* are anything but friends of mine. Now you know we have talked over amongst us the best mode of finishing Lucetta's education ; and I have at last, and chiefly in consequence of what you have said, decided upon a governess—only that I am so dread-

fully afraid of a young woman in that line, because, to be fitted for the situation, she must have been well educated, highly finished, and even if not well born, at least well bred. Well, then, you see, I cannot help feeling that the contrast between the early life and later pursuits of such a person must be most painful—constantly irksome, and even revolting—and, although I should not quite like to make Lucetta's governess my own companion, still it is repugnant to my feelings to do anything, of any kind, however trifling, that could in the slightest degree tend to awaken the feelings which I have attempted to describe, in the mind of a young woman so situated."

"Your feelings are most amiable," said Peregrine.

"But I think," continued the lady, "I have heard of a person who would entirely suit. Oh, Mr. Bunce, Mr. Bunce, look at that dreadful horse-stinger, or whatever it is—look at its wings—and its tail—don't, for heaven's sake, let it come near me—it's a terrible thing."

Saying which, she crouched under Peregrine's shoulder, in a manner quite consonant with her apprehensions of the horrible dragon with which she fancied herself threatened, and of which she was infinitely more afraid than she would have been of a dragoon, but which inspired him with a Perseus-like feeling; and, humouring her timidity while encouraging her resolution, he ventured to convert the cowering for protection into something particular, and returned the sinking weakness of apprehension with a pressure indicative of a more tender, if not equally timid feeling.

"You are quite safe," said Peregrine,—"quite safe with *me*."

"I feel I am," said Mrs. Mimminy, looking on the ground with eyes bright as the stars, and which seemed endued with the power of perpetual motion,—"I am sure I am."

"You must be safe everywhere," said Peregrine; "the sentiments you have expressed towards the young lady whom you propose to engage as Lucetta's instructress, show the excellence of your heart."

"I am not bad at heart," said Mrs. Mimminy, leaning, as he thought, rather more heavily on Peregrine's arm than usual; "but, after all, a widow is a solitary being. To be sure, my child is all to me; but she will grow up and leave me; and—I tremble to think of what will happen."

"But," said Peregrine, gently drawing the hand that rested on his arm a little nearer to himself, and perhaps gently

raising it towards the region of his heart,—“ why remain a widow ? ”

“ Oh,” said the lady, “ the dread I have of involving myself in new engagements. My dear old Billy was so kind, and so gentle, and so good ;—but then, if I were to think, which I never shall, I am sure, of marrying again, the idea of bringing into the family a harsh father-in-law for that dear Lucetta.”

“ Who could be harsh to a young woman growing into beauty, and with such a mind as hers will be ? ” said Peregrine.

“ Young woman one can’t call her,” said the widow, somewhat peevishly ; “ she is forward of her age—and clever—certainly clever—with her father’s mind.”

“ And her mother’s eyes,” said Peregrine.

“ Oh, get away,” replied the lady, gently pushing him from her, as if reproachfully.

If that was not the minute to “ pop,” as Uncle Noll would have said, what one ever could be ? Peregrine saw his opportunity ; and, drawing the arm with which he had been repulsed, close to his side, and heaving a sigh, caused rather by doubt, and fear, and agitation, as to the critical state of his siege, he whispered,—

“ My dearest woman ! —”

What more he would have added, history has lost, inasmuch as, at the moment these words had passed his lips, a smart tap from the top of a walking-stick between his shoulders startled him : he turned round, and beheld the indefatigable Dumbledore, with Lucetta at his side, who had brought him in pursuit of mamma and Bunce.

“ Hit you ‘ plenum backi,’ eh ? ” said the wag.

“ Not one of your most agreeable hits,” said Peregrine, driven by the interruption into something like a passion—suddenly moderated, however, by a gentle pressure of Mrs. Mimminty’s delicate hand, accompanied by a softly murmured “ never mind.”

These words, taken in conjunction with her practical attentions, cheered him ; he felt that all was going right ; but he could not quite define in his mind the feeling by which Miss Lucetta was actuated in bringing Dumbledore after them. Whether it was the anxiety of not having him for her father-in-law, or the desire to make him her mother’s son-in-law ;—for as to the excusable statement of Mrs. Mimminty, that Lucy was but just turned fourteen, with all his reliance upon the lady’s veracity, he had been for the last week perfectly con-

vinced that she must have made some little mistake in her calculation, or rather in her recollection, of the period of the young lady's birth.

"Well, we have caught you," said Dumbledore.

"Yes," thought Peregrine; "and I wish you had stayed where you were."

"Luncheon's ready, Mrs. Mimminy," continued the hospitable man; but the lady leant heavily upon Peregrine's arm, for she had been frightened by the abruptness of Dumbledore's approach.

"I am not hungry," said the lady.

"Oh, come back, and have some luncheon," said Dumbledore; "there's a glorious venison pasty, or, as I call it, a '*rege pio*,'—ha! ha! ha!—and a pleasing variety of other things—isn't there, Lucetta?"

"Yes," said Lucetta—evidently excited *somewhat* with regard to Peregrine's protracted *tête-à-tête* with ma.

"See the shrimpers," said Dumbledore,—"there they go; theirs are *net* profits,—ha! ha! ha!"

"But, dear me," said Mrs. Mimminy, "does not such constant exposure to the water produce all sorts of colds? I should be terrified if I was ordered to do that."

"Nothing—nothing, when you are used to it," said Dumbledore; "they don't wade far—'*ne plus ultra*,' as I say—not above the knee—ha! ha! ha!—and if they *do* get chilled, why their wives give them something comfortable to cheer them when they get home—'*ardens committere posset*' best thing in the world for a cold—ha! ha! ha!"

"Are you going to ride or drive after luncheon?" said Mrs. Mimminy to Dumbledore.

"Must, ma'am, must do one or the other," said he; "if I don't take exercise after luncheon, I go to sleep—eh?—','—ha! ha! ha!"

"Because," said she, "I really am so terrified at those spirited horses of Mrs. Dumbledore's, that, if you don't mind, I would rather walk."

Peregrine here ventured, not what might be called a "high pressure" movement upon her arm, but just that sort of indication of his anxiety, that she would reject the drive for the stroll, which she could not fail to understand.

When, after this move, Mrs. Mimminy added, in the most silvery tone,—"*Lucetta, dear, you can go with Mrs. Dumbledore, if you like,*" Peregrine was perfectly satisfied, and Lucetta was not.

"Look at that poor fellow," said Dumbledore, who was full of benevolence, "look at that poor 'needy knifegrinder.' I see him every day—seems to get nothing—they call him 'Gan pities' in France—no wonder—how does he get his bread, poor '*bellus homo*,' as my friend the field-marshall says—I can't make it out. Then those unhappy fellows who drive the flies and cars, as they call 'em—the 'miserable *carmen*,' as Virgil has it, how do they live out of the season? or the poor girls in the market—eh?—the 'prænomine *mollies*?'—sad world! Well, never mind, Lucy dear, if they don't choose to go to luncheon, we will—and they two may remain, as I call my sour cider in the country, *perry pathetic*.—Ha! ha! ha! Leave 'em to themselves."

"Why," said the lady, "my head aches, and I think a walk will do me good. Which way do you mean to go?"

"Any way; all one to us," said Dumbledore.

"What I meant, was," said the lady, "that if you drove out in any direction in which we could meet *you* returning, it would be very nice to be taken up and carried home: and by that time the horses would have got quieter."

"Well," said Dumbledore, "then we'll drive on the London road to Patcham, and so on; and in returning, will wait with Lucy at the corner of the dairy. '*Dare Lucem*,'—ha! ha! ha!—you and Peregrine—'*quere Peregrinum*,' as I call him, can stroll round by the old Chalybeate, come down by the malt-houses, and catch us just as you are getting tired."

"Not of each other," said Lucetta, with a look which she must have meant Peregrine to see.

"Well, then, good-bye; Mrs. D. must be waiting," said Dumbledore; "so Lucetta and I will be off. I see the carriage at the door."

"Now mind," said Mrs. Mimminy, "mind, Lucetta, that you put on a boa and shawl: I am terrified at a chill—do take care of yourself, child."

"Yes, ma," said Lucetta, "I'll take care of *myself*—take care of *yourself*, for I'm sure you have scarcely anything on."

"But then I am walking," said Mrs. Mimminy.

"Yes, I know *that*!" replied the daughter, with an emphasis which she meant Peregrine to understand,—and so the *parti Carré* separated, and great were the results thereof, as the reader is destined, at no great distance of time, to discover.

Now it had happened, that the excursion along the coast which Peregrine had announced to his uncle as being about to

take place, had “gone off,” as people say, through Mrs. Dumbledore’s great solicitude to ascertain the probable expense of the undertaking. Very much of the commissariat of the Dumbledore establishment was supplied from their own place in the country. The *materiel* for the housekeeper’s room, consisting of preserves, pickles, and condiments, were all home-made. Their wine came from their own cellars; even the butter, cream, poultry, and vegetables, were domestic; in short, everything was conducted upon the same principle as if they were in one of their own houses. Whereupon, considering, Mrs. Dumbledore argued, not unreasonably, that as sea was sea, as cliffs were cliffs, as shingle was shingle, and sand was sand, it would be about the silliest enterprise ever undertaken to make a tour, full of inconvenience and expense, perhaps with occasional inefficiency of accommodation, a suspicion of bad cooking, and an almost certainty of bad wine—for no earthly purpose but to have the advantage of looking at Beachy-head with a rickety glass belonging to the hotel at East Bourne, on one side of it, instead of looking at it with a good glass of their own on the other side of it—dragging and grinding up and down hills one way, and down hills and up hills back again, for no possible reason as she could see—satisfied as she was, that the whole cost would fall upon Dumbledore, who in moving his visitors would never think of permitting them to share in the charges of the excursion.

Leave we this mercenary theme. The pair of Dumbledores have eaten their luncheon, so has Lucetta—she has been to her dressing-room, given a fresh twist to her graceful curls—a slight refreshing wash to her bright eyes and glowing cheeks—settled her pretty figure to its best advantage—bitten her lips, just sufficiently to give them an enticing redness, and returned to the dining-parlour, putting on her gloves—much too tight, but (being French) “stretchable.” A brown parasol was dangling on her arm, although it was mid November, and the prescribed boa was hanging over her shoulders.—Into the carriage they mount, the order is given to the coachman for his route—and away!

The inveterate resolution of Dumbledore to make himself an ass, nothing could stop; and even with his wife, who, as we have already observed, had the very lowest opinion of his drollery, and with Lucetta, who wondered what upon earth his *jokes* meant, he could not avoid expressing his belief that a man whom he saw watching another man bringing something across the shingle from a French fishing-boat, was a custom-house officer.

Neither of his companions cared whether he was, or was not : but Dumbledore swore that he was sure he *was* a custom-house officer.—“Aut *seizer*, aut nullus,” said he—“ha ! ha ! ha !”

Now, as to laughing, Lucetta was not in a humour to laugh, even at anything which she might happen to comprehend—it was perfectly clear to *her*, that Peregrine had engaged her mother’s affections, or if not her affections, at least had interested her much more than anybody in the shape of man, whom she remembered to have seen in the house, or with her. To be sure, it might be that Lucetta’s mind was opening to a quicker apprehension of such matters ; and it might be, that something like jealousy—it is quite wonderful how early in life strong feelings take hold of female hearts and mind—might have tended to make the girl pensive and thoughtful during the drive. She could not banish from her imagination the walk in progress at that very moment—she heard in her ears the voice of Peregrine as he was conversing with her mother, of whose weak points and little peculiarities, having lived with her as she had lived, since the departure from this transitory life of the late respected and respectable old Billy, her lamented father, she was quite quick enough to be fully aware ; and Mrs. Dumbledore was kept in great agitation by seeing how thoughtlessly the dear girl had let her boa hang over the britschka, regardless of the mud it might collect, being quite sure it could not have cost less than ten or fifteen guineas.

“But,” said Peregrine to the widow, as she mounted the once rural road from Hove, “if you feel so deeply the isolated position in which you are placed, and I can easily comprehend and duly appreciate such a feeling, why not again take to yourself that aid and support which you so justly consider essential to the comfort and even security of a young widow of your time of life, which thousands would be too proud and too happy to afford you ?”

“That I doubt,” said Mrs. Mimminy ; “but, however, the feeling I have, and ever shall have, for my dear old Billy—it may sound unromantic, Mr. Bunce, to use that familiar appellation in mentioning my deceased partner ; but it was *he*—he himself—who taught me to call him so ; and I never can associate any other appellation with the recollection of his beloved form, now in heaven, but Billy—it may, and perhaps would, to coarse minds, and uncongenial dispositions, appear ludicrous—I can’t help it.”

“Oh,” said Peregrine, drawing her near him—for during their walk, even as far as it had yet extended, he had established, in a

great degree, “the freedom of the press,” which, as the patriots say (a principle upon which they never act), “is like the air we breathe; if we have it not, we die :” and had discovered that the lady did by no means object to his mode of pointing his moral or adorning his tale by that sort of practical emphasis—“Oh, conventional terms in families seem to me the land-marks of domestic happiness. I knew a couple, whose names were Merrington Delaville, who always called each other Daddledums ; and the most serious pair I ever associated with familiarly, a Mr. and Mrs. Scramshaw, of Catterdale, in Cumberland, never addressed each other, but as ‘Cocksey’ and ‘Popsy’ ;—these things are all matters of taste and feeling ; but pray go on.”

“Oh, how you sympathize with all my feelings, said the widow ; but now, Mr. Bunce,—I am so terrified—to tell you all about my dear Billy—you will not think me quite a fool ?”

“A fool !” interrupted Bunce—“no—I should think NOT !—pray go on—every word you utter adds new interest to this happy conversation.”

“Do you know,” said Mrs. Mimminy, “I have never mentioned this, even to Lucetta. I do think I have seen dear Billy three or four times since his death.”

“Indeed,” said Peregrine. “It is quite possible, inasmuch as nothing is impossible to Providence, and the question of ghosts is one which has been mooted for some thousands of years, and has not been yet, nor perhaps ever will be, decided.”

“He promised to come if he could,” said Mrs. Mimminy, —“and I think—only don’t laugh at me—I quite tremble at the confidence I am making.”

“Laugh !” said Peregrine, indignantly, biting his lips though to prevent a burst.

“It was in an inn yard at Rochester,” said Mrs. Mimminy,—“I had got out of the carriage while they were changing the horses ; Lucetta wanted some wine-and-water, and I am sure it was Billy—only never betray me—it was about two o’clock in the day—Ah ! I’m sure it was he.”

She cried—Peregrine pressed—

“Was the figure like the deceased ?” said Peregrine, affecting the deepest solemnity.

“Oh no, no,” said Mrs. Mimminy ; “it was not like *that*—I know I shall expose myself to your laughter—no ; he had, as I have told you, promised to come to me in any shape he could ; well—now, pray Mr. Bunce, do not say anything about this—it was market-day at Rochester—and I saw him there in the shape

of a large sheep—I never think of it without trembling—the poor animal, which had remarkably large horns (I never shall forget it) followed me from amongst the other sheep to the carriage-door—and you know a sheep seldom goes anywhere alone: I spoke to him—but that seemed to have no effect. I watched Lucetta—she took no notice whatever; but as we drove off, he went baa! quite loud; and the sound thrilled through my heart."

This was what might be called a settler for Peregrine: here she was—his if he chose—the depth and extent of her sensibility were here displayed; and encouraged by his sympathy and tender affection, she imparted to him her further belief that she had seen him again in a farmyard, near Cheltenham, in the shape of a turkey-cock. She subsequently gave Peregrine some reasons why she thought she might have been mistaken in that case; but she was perfectly convinced, that since *that* he had followed her about the streets for two years in the shape of a "pug-dog," which she was sure to meet wherever she went.

"These feelings," said Peregrine, "even if bordering upon superstition, do honour to your heart, and the confidence you place in the expression of the anxious desire of the dear departed to re-visit you, is most exemplary."

"These convictions," said the widow, "are what make me so timid. I have never till now found anybody who would understand or sympathize with me; what a delight it is when one feels sure, as I do now, of ——"

Here she stopped, and burst into tears—*this* was the moment—"to be or not to be,"—what could he do better? he knew Dumbledore would not have deceived him as to the property—the woman—*quoad* woman—was nice enough;—minds are minds—bodies are bodies—and then to be Lucetta's father-in-law; and then—and so—looking carefully about (which is particularly essential in the purlieus of watering-places, where everybody has his telescope out), he pressed her to his heart—kissed her lips—and said nothing.

She said nothing either; but when he had "marred the rudeness," she again pressed his arm, and they proceeded towards the dairy, without speaking, for more than a minute. At the expiration of that time, Peregrine, who was resolved to know all, drew his hand across his forehead, and exclaimed, in the tone of a tragedy actor, and with about as much sincerity—"Then! I am the happiest man alive!"

Oh, how did his ears tingle for a rejoinder to this declaration,

and what were the delights he experienced when he felt a sort of dependent lean towards him on the part of his fair companion, followed by a sob, and these words—"And *I* the happiest woman!"

"Come," said Peregrine to himself (at the sentiment ending with the certainty), "the thing's done—nailed, and here I am "*settled at last*," and he would have more forcibly expressed his happiness, but they had just turned into the high road, and he had no opportunity of sealing the contract in his particular mode of performing that sort of ceremony.

Before placing Mrs. Mimminy and her betrothed in the carriage, which, according to pre-arrangement, was waiting with the Dumbledores and Lucetta at the appointed spot, it seems necessary to vindicate her intellectual reputation from any ill-natured attack touching her belief as to the extraordinary masquerade appearances of her dear old Billy, by referring upon undeniable authority to the unquestionable existence of similar ideas and opinions in minds avowedly much stronger, and infinitely better cultivated than that of our poor widow.\*

Such fancies, which even to the "adoration of the whispering wind," are purely Pythagorean, are, as Mrs. Cornwall Baron Wilson justly says, "by the inconsiderate, and those who have no power of believing what they cannot comprehend, treated with a certain degree of ridicule; however, in a world *in* which, *of* which, and *about* which, everything is incomprehensible to the finite mind of man, there can be neither wit nor wisdom in sneering at what to us may seem an absurdity, but which, after all, gives evidence of tender feeling and unbroken affection."

As to Mrs. Mimminy, she certainly did not carry her adherence to the doctrines of her school to such a serious extent, as to inconvenience herself; for however much her sensibilities might have been awakened by the sight of the ram at Rochester, and the cock-turkey at Cheltenham, she abstained not from eating. *Dindon aux truffes* and a *côtelette à la soubise* was her favourite dish.

Another very curious instance of a belief in such transmigrations, occurred at Metz, under the influence of the celebrated, or rather notorious Count Cagliostro, of which M. Fleury gives the following version in his History of the French Stage:—

"M. Latour-Eccieu, who had amassed a considerable fortune

\* *Vide* page 287, vol. ii. of the "Memoirs of the late Duchess of St. Alban's," written by the talented Mrs. Cornwall Baron Wilson.

in some of the colonies, married, on his return to France, a lady whom he had met with in a secluded country place, his choice being influenced by the maxim of Sganarelle :

“ ‘Epouser une sotte est pour n’être pas sot.’

But in his prudent calculations there was one little circumstance which M. Latour-Eccieu, like many other similarly wise gentlemen, lost sight of; namely, that though an ignorant novice may be very willing to keep the right path, yet it is a hundred chances to one if she does not, on her introduction to the world, meet with somebody who will lead her into the wrong one. Thus it happened in the case here referred to: and the attentions paid her by an officer of the garrison became very particular.

“ The husband grew suspicious, and his suspicions were confirmed by the whisperings of friends; which, added to some pecuniary disappointments, determined him to adopt a project which he had some time contemplated. This plan was to freight a vessel with merchandise, and to go abroad again on a mercantile speculation. ‘ If,’ said he, ‘ my wife be guilty, I will leave her enough to live on, and I will depart alone. If she be innocent, I will take her with me, and make every exertion to secure to her a fate worthy of her fidelity.’

“ Whilst settling his affairs with a view to this final departure, he had occasion to make several little journeys. On returning from the last of these progresses, he informed his wife (who was exceedingly superstitious) that whilst travelling he had been lucky enough to meet with Cagliostro;—that celebrated man, who possessed the faculty of penetrating the inmost recesses of the human heart, had observed his depression of spirits, and had hinted to him the possibility of his wife’s infidelity during his absence from home. The wife vehemently protested her innocence, and expressed her indignation at the suspicion. M. Latour-Eccieu soothed her by the assurance that he would never accuse her wrongfully. Cagliostro, he added, had furnished him with the means of infallibly arriving at the truth. So saying, he drew from his pocket a small phial, containing a coloured liquid. ‘ To-night,’ said he, ‘ when we retire to rest, I have only to drink this magic potion. If my suspicions be well founded, you will find me to-morrow morning transformed into a cat.’

“ ‘ Into a cat! ’ exclaimed the wife.

“ ‘ Into a black tom cat! ’ exclaimed the husband.

" 'Gracious heaven! . . but surely you will never be so rash as to drink that horrid draught. It would be tempting the judgment of heaven, which you know the church forbids.'

" 'But there are commands of the church as well as prohibitions and I wish to ascertain whether her commands have been observed,' said M. Eccieu. 'Besides, you may retaliate; for this potion answers equally well both wife and husband. If therefore I have ever broken my faith to you, you have only to drink this potion at night on going to bed, and next morning I shall find *you* metamorphosed into a cat!'

" 'Me metamorphosed into a cat! . . Do you imagine I would ever consent to drink your horrid potion? . . A cat, indeed! To catch mice, and cry 'Mew!' . . I shudder at the very idea of it. Now, never think of taking that stuff, my dear. Let me persuade you to throw it away.'

" But the more the lady inveighed against the potion, the more firmly was the husband determined to follow out his plan; and accordingly that same night, when he retired to rest, he swallowed a good part of the mystic beverage. The lady tried to suppress her emotion; but notwithstanding her credulity, she felt a hope that the whole was merely a trick prompted by jealousy. She pretended to fall asleep; but every now and then curiosity forced her to stretch out her hand towards her husband, in order to ascertain whether the metamorphosis had commenced. M. Latour observed this; and distracted as he was by his fears and hopes, it was not without considerable satisfaction that he ascertained by her snoring that she had really fallen soundly asleep.

" About seven in the morning the lady awoke. All her recollections of the potion and the cat seemed to be the effect of a dream. She yawned, rubbed her eyes, and then turning round, missed her husband. She called him, but received no answer. She became alarmed, and was about to rise, when she observed something moving in the bed. She turned down the bedclothes, and to her horror beheld a large black cat! . . It was her husband . . . her dear husband! The fatal potion had wrought its destined effect, and her crime was discovered! . . But in his present altered state, her unfortunate husband could not reproach her. She fell on her knees beside the cat, called him by the tenderest names, confessed her fault, and sued for pardon. The cat at length raised his head, and stared with apparent astonishment at the lady, who was hanging over him

with suppliant hands. ‘He will not recognize me,’ she exclaimed. ‘He despises me ! Alas ! I well deserve this !’ Meanwhile the husband, who was concealed in a closet, overheard every word uttered by his wife during this curious scene. He seized the first opportunity of effecting his escape, and on quitting the house proceeded straight to the sea-port, where the ship was waiting which was destined to convey him abroad.

“The disconsolate wife now lavished all her affection on the cat. Her friends endeavoured in vain to convince her that she was the victim of delusion ; but in vain. The inexplicable disappearance of her husband, the well-known power of Cagliostro, the phial, and the mystic potion—all convinced her of the terrible truth. In the hope of expiating her error, she resolved to devote her future existence wholly to her Black Tommy. As to the animal, he showed himself perfectly satisfied with a mistress who tended him with such affectionate solicitude. During the day his resting-place was an embroidered cushion, at the fire-side ; and his dinner consisted of a pâté or some other dainty, cooked and served to him by the lady’s own hands. The fair penitent interpreted every look, answered every mew of her favourite, and was never more happy than when, at night, he vouchsafed to repose on the couch beside her.

“Such was the state of affairs for the space of six whole months. The lady was gradually beginning to reconcile herself to the metamorphosis ; but unfortunately, the cat grew weary of his monotonous happiness, and sighed again to taste that liberty which he was wont to enjoy before he became the honoured representative of M. Latour-Eccieu. One fine spring morning he was discovered to be missing, and after an anxious and vigilant search he was at length discovered on the roof of a neighbouring house, holding gentle converse with an amiable *minette* of his acquaintance. It now became Madame Latour-Eccieu’s task to pardon : but this *escapade* helped somehow or other to reconcile her to her own conscience, and to banish remorse. Indeed, report affirmed that she renewed her acquaintance with her old friend the officer ; and if he did not altogether succeed in undressing her, it is nevertheless certain that the lady and the cat became more and more indifferent to each other ; mutually closing their eyes to each other’s foibles, and thenceforward living on the easy terms of a Parisian husband and wife.”

To return from this digression to our own more particular friends. Nothing could have been more inconvenient, as it happened, than what otherwise would have been the opportune

meeting with Mr. Dumbledore, who, in order to prevent the possibility of Mrs. Mimminy's fatiguing herself, had driven up the road, at the corner of which they had pre-proposed to wait: a step which they took upon the suggestion of Miss Lucetta, who, for some reason best known to herself, but which might be guessed at by some of our youthful readers, thought the shorter the walk her mamma took with Mr. Peregrine Bunce the better; and therefore expressed to Mr. Dumbledore a great deal of filial anxiety about her mother's health, and her apprehensions—peculiar as it seemed to that particular occasion,—that she might catch a dreadful cold, of which probability she had warned her before she left her to her companion, on her return to the house.

Nobody can, or perhaps it might be better said, everybody must, feel how dreadfully disagreeable it is for two persons, whose whole minds are engrossed with a subject of vital importance to both of them, who have five minutes before taken the deciding step of their lives, to be hoisted into a barouche, and buttoned up in it, with a matter-of-fact lady, a sharp-eyed young girl, deeply interested in their proceedings, and an inveterate talker and joker "the happiest man alive" (as Peregrine had just before called *himself*), whose incessant roll of words nothing could stop, and who, laughing himself at every turn, seemed disappointed, and even angry, if his companions did not sympathize in his merriment.

Peregrine felt that he looked *géné*—the widow's cheeks were really flushed—her eyes bore marks of tears—and moreover, they glanced upon her affianced with an expression not lost upon Lucetta. Dumbledore was humming a tune, and his wife was wondering how much a couple of fowls fetched in the shops, thinking no more of anything else than their coach-horses; but Lucetta, who sat bodkin between the Dumbledores, threw the whole community into confusion by exclaiming, with an affected wriggle of her little body,

"Why, la! ma! you have been crying."

"Hey?" said Dumbledore, "in the '*tears état*,' as I said yesterday."

"Crying, child!" said the widow, in a tone exceedingly different from that which she usually adopted in addressing her daughter,—"how can you be such a fool?"

Lucetta was startled by the sharpness of the answer, and was very nearly in the "*tears état*" herself; nor did Peregrine very much admire a display of asperity, which he had not till then fancied congenial with the character and disposition of the lady.

"It's the wind," said Mr. Dumbledore, "the air is sharp, 'Libs, Notus, *Austere*,' as the book says.—Ha! ha!"

This laugh rang harshly in Lucetta's ear, nor was Peregrine quite at his ease under the fire of a look which the excited girl fixed full upon his face. He played the eagle for a minute, but the sun was too bright; he owled away from it, and endeavoured to change the conversation by a remark less distinguished perhaps by its novelty than its obviousness, that it was wonderful to see how Brighton was increasing.

"Even here," said he, "where a short time ago there was nothing but fields, are streets, inhabited, paved, and lighted."

"Yes, true," said Dumbledore, "very right—as Virgil says, 'ubique *Pavor*'—ha! ha! long streets, eh? all ramifications from the old town."

Hereabouts Mrs. Mimminy and Mrs. Dumbledore began a sort of whispering dialogue, carried on in perfect security. The wind blew, the wheels rattled, and as they sat opposite to each other, they contrived to effect a conjunction of their poke bonnets so intimate and complete that ears even as long as a Dumbledore's could not catch a sound. As everybody, who is nobody, fancies that everybody else in the world is thinking of him—his affairs, his history, and his interests, so Peregrine Bunce felt assured that his beloved was recounting the history of their walk and its results to her calculating hostess, instead of which it was a confidential communication touching some incident which had occurred during the stroll, totally disconnected with the main interest of the *tête-à-tête*, and relating either to the coming untied of one of her shoes, or something else, which the conscious and sensitive lover (?) conjured up into a development—somewhat premature, as he thought—of the *dénouement* of their proceedings.

"Let's go to the play to-night," said Dumbledore, as they passed the theatre *en route* to the west cliff, reminded of its existence by seeing the bills at its door; "we haven't been to the play since the night of the row."

"A riot?" said Peregrine, whose throat seemed parched, whose eyes were hot, and whose hands were cold, and who scarcely knew what he said.

"Yes," said Dumbledore, "some fellows had got a dog in the pit—'Cur in theatrum,' as the Field-marshal says, and would not part with it. I never heard such a noise—it was all very bad—an opera, with no singing; only 'Tribus *Choros*' in the finale—came away after the first piece."

"Yes," said Mrs. Dumbledore, "and had a private box, which cost one pound eleven shillings and sixpence, besides a shilling for the play-bill."

"What's acted to-night?" said Lucetta.

"'Miss in her teens,' and 'The Spoiled Child,'" said Mrs. Mimminy, in a tone meant to be severe.

"Oh," said Lucetta, colouring up, "I thought it was 'The Irish Widow,' or perhaps 'The Way to get married.'"

Lucky was it that the carriage at that moment rattled up to Dumbledore's door;—the storm that had been brewing in the young heart of Miss Mimminy had broken,—the fire that had been smouldering had burst into flame—Lucetta's aversion for her mother's marriage was no longer a matter of doubt. Peregrine was quite alive to *that*; the moment he looked at the girl, when they got out of the carriage, it was equally evident that the mother and daughter equally well understood each other; but Peregrine, who had, as we know, a certain degree of personal vanity, was more than ever puzzled to ascertain [the real cause of Lucetta's hostility upon the present occasion; that is to say, whether she objected generally to her mother's placing her under the control of a father-in-law, or whether her opposition was shown towards *him* peculiarly; that doubt being again subdivided into another, whether she objected to him as a father-in-law, because she disliked him, or because she liked him more than would be consistent with her position and character as his step-daughter.

It seemed to Peregrine that he should find certain difficulties in his progress towards happiness; however, he had taken his line—and had declared "popped," as Nunky would have said; or as Dumbledore would have bleated, "exerted his '*Vox Pop.*'" and as the proverb goes, "his bed was made;"—as to the concluding part of the adage which says, "and so he must lie in it,"—that did not appear quite so certain. In the confusion of his calculations it is undoubtedly the fact, that he had begun to think he had "missed his tip," and attributed Lucetta's irritability to her personal admiration of himself.—He was all unsettled; which, in the days when strong writing was admitted, would have been called "bedivelled;" and while rejoicing in his certain achievement of the widow, became restless and miserable because the success of *that* enterprise rendered equally certain the abandonment of the daughter.

In leaving the carriage, at the door of which Peregrine, who had leaped from his seat to be gallant—double gallant

he seemed to want to be—Mrs. Dumbledore declined his arm, inasmuch as she was particularly assiduous in preserving from the contamination of the hinder wheel the ends of a scarf, which had cost seven pounds twelve shillings and sixpence, but the widow accepted it, and with a manner and look perfectly conclusive; the pressure which accompanied both, was practically eloquent. Peregrine having disposed of his lovely burthen, presented the vacated arm to Lucetta.

"No, I thank you," said the lively girl, "I am quite young enough to get out by myself; you had better go and take care of mamma;" and so she bounded down the steps of the carriage—up the steps of the house—and so to her dressing-room; perhaps to vent her rage in a flood of tears, a not improbable consequence of the agitation under which for three quarters of an hour she had been suffering.

"Come," said Dumbledore to Peregrine, "let us go to Castle Square—these double posts are mighty convenient—let's go and see the mails come in, or as old Terence says, '*ut videamus malo*,'—ha! ha! ha!—I'm all for exercise; as for my wife, she never walks—gad, she is like one of the women without legs—what d'ye call 'em, the *Carryattitudes*;—got too much upon her head to walk—do you know why her head reminds me of the Psalms?—Eh?"

"No," said Peregrine, not listening to the question.

"*Tite* and *Braidy*.—Ha! ha! ha!"

And having fired this shot, the indefatigable Dumbledore took his friend's arm, and away they walked.

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## CHAPTER XI.

IT may easily be imagined, that a timid, sensitive, superstitious being like the fair and fragile Mrs. Mimmamy, would be considerably overcome by the events which had recently occurred: she, as well as Peregrine, had taken a deciding and decided step. And when she reached her own room, the consideration of the rapidity with which she herself had "jumped to a conclusion," quite terrified her—still it was done; and therefore she began to re-number in her mind the reasons which had induced her to accept, or rather meet half way, the offer of Mr. Peregrine

Bunce to be her true and lawful husband ; but it was strange enough to observe, in all her considerations and re-considerations of the subject, the attainment of the hovering sanction of dear old Billy never once entered her head, neither did the baa of the sheep, nor the gobble of the turkey, nor even the bark of the pug, sound in her ears to warn or guide her in her course.

Lucetta alone seemed to her the obstacle to the completion of her design, and the fulfilment of her engagement : had the events of that morning occurred the day before, she might have ridded herself of one great difficulty by sending her daughter back to school—if not to the one whence she had been suddenly withdrawn, to another ; but now, not only was Lucetta prepared for a different mode of discipline, but a young lady was actually engaged as governess, and would be at Brighton on the following Monday. This, however, might be managed, and matters arranged ; but what was to be her next step ?—how should she communicate the state of affairs to Mrs. Dumbledore,—and how announce the fact to Lucetta,—although she felt conscious that the young lady was not quite without a suspicion of what was in progress.

Peregrine was equally puzzled as to *his* course ; he felt it only right, as the widow was living under the care and protection, and in the house of the Dumbledores, to make his host acquainted with what had occurred during his walk with the lady.

Previously, however, to doing anything else in the business, the accepted lover determined to avail himself of the period which would elapse before dinner, to write to his uncle, reporting progress—if no more than progress that might be called, which was in fact carrying his point—the reader perhaps would not object to seeing his letter, as being calculated to afford a fair illustration of his character and principles :—

“ Brighton, Nov. —, 18—.

“ MY DEAR UNCLE,—“ I cannot permit this evening’s post to go out without announcing to you my complete success in the undertaking in which you know I have been engaged during my residence here. I have already described the gentle amiability of the fair widow’s disposition, the innocent playfulness of her sweet daughter, and the doubting hope which I entertained that I might eventually interest her in my fate. What I prayed for has happened—she has accepted me—I am the happiest man alive—now, dear uncle, do not reproach me with procrastination in ‘ popping.’ ”

“ In affairs of this sort, especially situated as I am, something

more than mere affection is necessary to happiness ; and although I so far followed your kind and prudent advice, as to not plighting my faith to a woman without any money, I have not yet ascertained with any degree of certainty, the amount of Mrs. Mimminy's fortune. In the world one generally hears of ladies' wealth in the same way as of a man-of-war's strength, in a description of which you often see—the Grampus (or whatever it may be) pierced for eighty guns, and carries seventy-two—the lady, whose 'rating' amounts to fifty thousand pounds, generally 'carries' about five-and-twenty. However, I am satisfied with the worldly part of the match, and delighted with the bright-eyed contingency ; and as for the jointure and personal property, with allowances, &c. for Lucetta, I think that Dumbledore's first 'hint' is tolerably near the mark.

" The favour I am at present going to ask of you, is, that if it does not greatly interfere with your present engagements, or is not likely seriously to inconvenience you, you would come down to us here. I will undertake to get you exceedingly comfortable rooms at the inn where I am lodged, and I am satisfied that you and my friend Dumbledore, between whom and yourself I often see a congeniality of character and disposition—will make it out admirably together.—You will see my intended : I am sure *she* will be pleased to see *you*, and it will give a sanction to my proceedings, which will be most particularly agreeable to me.

" If you could contrive to be down with us by dinner-time on Monday, apprizing me previously of your intention, so that everything may be ready for your reception, it would be very delightful. I have hinted to Dumbledore my intention of proposing this to you, and he begs to add his request to mine ; although he is still uninformed of the result of my three weeks' acquaintance with his fair guest. *Do* say yes, my dear Uncle. I am sure it will do you good—it will do me good—it will do my cause good—so, say Yes ; and let me hear by return of post.

" Yours, affectionately,

" To Oliver Bunce, Esq.,

" PEREGRINE BUNCE.

" Tavistock Hotel,

" Covent Garden, London."

In this letter there is nothing apparent but a dutiful affection and respect on the part of the nephew towards his warm-hearted but eccentric relation ; but more lies under the surface. Our friend Peregrine very rarely acted upon a single motive ; and

in the present instance his object was to get old Noll down to the scene of action, so that when the fitting season came, he should be on the spot, to declare, if necessary, what he meant to do for his hopeful relation, and how far meet the views of those whom, it was to be presumed, were interested on the part of Mrs. Mimminy.

Peregrine knew that Mrs. Mimminy was independent, as far as her own circumstances were concerned ; but he had frequently heard of a certain Major O'Callaghan, who was spoken of in the character of *one* of Lucetta's trustees—the distinctive numeral more than implying that there were others ; which, added to the instinctive dread he had of an Irish Major, instilled into his mind by the recollection of Major M'Larrup and his key-bugle, at Twigglesford, made him exceedingly anxious to have somebody on "his side" with him when the business drew to a close.

The letter was despatched, and Peregrine proceeded with more than usual care to dress for dinner ; and the reality of his feelings for once overcame the artificiality of his character : he was nervous and restless, and even apprehensive of the very silly figure he should cut in the presence of his betrothed ; but he might have spared himself much of his embarrassment, for Mrs. Mimminy had herself developed the whole history to Mrs. Dumbledore, long before his arrival.

"And where," said Mrs. Dumbledore, "do you mean to have your wedding-clothes, and all *that*, made ? I can recommend you an excellent milliner and dress-maker, whom I employ—fifteen per cent. cheaper than the common run, and five-and-forty under the mark of the foreigners."

"Of that," said Mrs. Mimminy, "I really have not yet thought : what affects me most, is the way in which I am to announce the event to my child, Lucetta. I am terrified to death, you know, at saying anything to anybody ; and I think I spoke crossly to her in the carriage to-day, and if she should feel that —"

"That what ?" said Mrs. Dumbledore. "I certainly never had a child—that's no fault of mine, you'll say ; but if I had fifty, I should not care two pins for any remark or observation of theirs upon what I chose to do."

"No," said the widow ; "but dear Lucetta—it is so exceedingly different—she is so quick, and so clever ; and I feel—I really don't know, but I think I ought in the first instance, to have broken this matter to her."

"Broken?" said Mrs. Dumbledore; "why, what does it signify? she has *her* fortune: you have *your* jointure—she cannot be injured by your marrying the man: what *he* has I really cannot say—she is provided for, and amply; and although you can keep *her* under control, seeing that your consent to her marrying is necessary, it is quite clear that *her* consent to your marrying is not."

"No," said Mrs. Mimminy, "that is quite true; but then she is so quick—so volatile—so—Ah, you don't enter into my feelings—I am terrified."

"Well, I shouldn't be terrified," said Mrs. Dumbledore; "I should say to her so and so, and so is to be, and so *must* be, and so *shall* be."

"Yes," said Mrs. Mimminy; "but she has such a spirit—and I really don't know—I do think I have been rather hasty in my proceedings: you know, dear Mrs. Dumbledore, young as she is—and *you* know she is not quite so young as she looks—she ought to have been consulted—at least, she ought to have been the first person apprised of it."

"I don't think," said Mrs. Dumbledore, "that she stands in need of any particular communication on the subject: what I saw in the carriage to-day, as we were coming home, was the first thing that gave me a notion of what was really going on; but her manner to you, and yours to her, set me thinking; and just as I was reckoning up the difference between the livery-man's bill for our horses here and in London, and wondering why there should be any difference at all, it came into my head all at once, that there *was* something between you and Mr. D.'s friend."

"How strange!" said the widow; "and now do tell me, my dear good Mrs. Dumbledore, do you think I have acted rashly—imprudently? I am terrified to death."

"Why," said Mrs. Dumbledore, "I, of myself, know nothing of Mr. Bunce—he is a friend of Mr. D.'s, and a very agreeable person; his uncle is rich—at least so D. tells me; he is quite good-looking enough for a man—and seems good-natured, which is best of all. I was looking at his pocket-handkerchief one night last week, which he left on the chair—real bandana—two pound the piece—without hemming; and I noticed his front—fine cambric—French;—studs real amethysts—four pound fifteen the set, I should say. I mean there's no sham about him—no Mosaic gold—no paste pins—no plating—all real."

"It isn't *that* I care about so much," said Mrs. Mimminy,

"but it is the final settlement of such a connection all at once, off-hand—that's what flurries me."

"Rely upon it," said Mrs. Dumbledore, "you have done no harm—a woman ought not to be left alone in the world ; you have acted wisely ; and now you have engaged this excellent governess for your girl, she will take her so far off your hands, that she will not interfere with your agreeable intercourse with your husband ; and when you desire it, why, the society of this young person will serve to make a little variety ; her musical talents will be exceedingly agreeable ; and I think her a bargain —a perfect bargain, at a hundred and ten pounds per annum, finding her own washing."

"Of course," said Mrs. Mimminy, "I never would think of having any but the best of governesses ; and really the idea of the school where she was, and the porter and oysters in the bedroom, and the painters and glaziers, and the dancing-master, and the lecturer—oh—I thought, when Lucetta told me of all that, I should have died ; no, my dear Mrs. D., I think I did right in getting her away from that place, especially when they brought up—what do they call them, dear ?—the '*Jim nasties*,' taught by a corporal of grenadiers, six feet two without his shoes, with a switch cane in his hand."

"For which you used to pay one pound five shillings per quarter," said Mrs. Dumbledore ; "no, no—rely upon it, you were right ; and my belief is, if this Miss Atkins turns out what Lady Dulcibella Damtuff says she is, she will be really an acquisition."

"And then," said Mrs. Mimminy, "you do not think I have acted precipitately ?"

"Indeed, no," answered the lady ; "I rather wondered at your waiting so long for a second husband ; and as for Lucetta, she is now of an age to care nothing—especially in her independent circumstances—for the domination of a father-in-law, and, least of all, such a father-in-law as Mr. Bunce."

"No," said the widow, "that's what I think—you know that she is turned sixteen—small of her age—quick, clever, and I have no doubt by her manner to-day, by what she has learned at school, and by the kind attentions of her maid, perfectly aware that she is older than I make her out to be : I would, if I could, get rid of Page—but I am terrified to death at her ; and dare not say a word, or find a fault."

"What do you give her a year ?" said Mrs. Dumbledore.

"Thirty guineas," said Mrs. Mimminy.

"Finds her own tea and sugar, I suppose?" said Mrs. Dumbledore.

"No," answered the widow, "I believe not; I'm sure I cannot say—but I should say no."

"Too much, my dear," said Mrs. Dumbledore—"too much—washing done at home?"

"No," said the widow.

"Well, then," concluded the lady of the house, "I would send her away—she is *rather* fine; and *I* think Lucetta is too fond of her. I hate to see servants made friends of—it never ends well; make them know their places, and they will keep them; but this Page seems more like a friend than a menial—besides, thirty guineas, with tea and sugar—mercy upon us!"

The dialogue was hereabouts interrupted by the entrance into the room of Lucetta—looking as pretty as girl could look; the flush given to her downy cheek by the cold air having been moderated, in a certain degree, by the care of Miss Page, under whose advice the dear young thing had applied some popular cosmetic, "perfectly harmless, and greatly conducive to beauty:" her countenance seemed to beam with intelligence, and the little *brusquerie*, which had taken place, touching the play-bill—in the carriage—had left enough of its reminiscence on her mind, to give an increased intellectuality to its expression.

"I hope you don't feel tired, ma, after your walk," said she to her mother—not in the tone which strangers might have expected—but then, there were no strangers present.

"No, dear," said Mrs. Mimminy.

The placid answer did not suit Miss Lucetta's notions at the moment.

"Isn't Mr. Bunce late, ma?" said the young lady.

Mrs. Mimminy was saved the pain of taking upon herself the responsibility of a reply, by Mrs. Dumbledore, who, raising her glass to her eye, and looking at a long-legged French clock under a tall glass, which was wagging its pendulum with a horrid measured—tick, tick—noise enough to drive a nervous man mad—pronounced that it yet wanted a quarter of an hour to dinner-time.

"Are you sure?" said Lucetta, whose anxiety about Peregrine's punctuality seemed considerably to exceed her mother's.

"Quite sure, my dear child," said Mrs. Dumbledore (not observing that at the word "child" Lucetta drew herself up, and threw her head back, as much as to say, "Child, am I?")—

"Quite sure—because Mr. Dumbledore gave forty-five guineas for the clock, without the glass-case, which was four pounds ten more, not including the rug upon which it stands, which was worked by Miss McUneasy, a maiden aunt of mine."

"I don't know," said Lucetta, "but it *seems* later;" and she walked to the window, and looked out with an air of watchfulness and wistfulness, which did not escape her mother's notice.

The timidity of the widow's nature kept her in a perpetual fever, because she had not apprised the girl (to whom there can be no doubt she constantly deferred—probably from a consciousness of her eventual importance in society, although even *that* depended, in a certain degree upon her own "will and power") of the step she had taken.

That a young heiress's maid is almost as dangerous a contingency as a boarding-school education, nobody can for a moment doubt;—the subservient cringing of these dependents—the complete abandonment of everything like principle or propriety, in order to carry their points, and what they call "keep in" with the young lady, are most terribly undermining, especially if it happens, as was here the case, that a jointured mother is in existence. Page knew, and so did all the servants in the establishment, who were of a class qualified to associate together, that Bunce was what one of them called "after the widow." Page knew that the young lady hated the idea of a father-in-law; and, moreover, was in possession of that secret which the reader never before has attained,—that Lucetta, who fancied her mother at thirty-four or so, a very venerable specimen of shattered humanity, had taken it into her head that Peregrine would make a much more suitable husband for herself,—this "great mystery" the young Crinoline had confided to Page; the result of which confidence was a calculation in Page's mind, which would be the more prudent and more profitable course for her to pursue—whether to encourage the hopes of the young lady, unknown to the elder one, or betray to the elder one the growing affections of the younger one.

Poor Lucetta, with all her precocity, was not a match for Page; and when she had confided to her, her certainty that Mr. Peregrine Bunce meant to be her father-in-law, and at the same time was apprised that Miss Atkins was to make her appearance on the following Monday as governess to the "child," it struck her that, in order to secure her own footing in the administration, she ought to take some deciding step to check the rising propensities of her young mistress, as regarded the gen-

tleman who was destined—as she herself thought—to be her pseudo-parent.

However, in due time, and punctual too, according to the dial of Mrs. Dumbledore's five-and-forty guinea clock, Mr. Peregrine Bunce arrived; he was announced, and made his appearance before Dumbledore—who was either superintending the drawing of his corks, or, for all we know, drawing them himself—had shown.

Peregrine approached the ladies—made his obeisances—shook hands with them—and with Lucetta—and if Mrs. Dumbledore had not known the whole story, she would not have noticed the reciprocated look of Bunce and the widow, which, although they conveyed a meaning, were not more remarkable than that which one continually sees exchanged between men and women at great *fêtes*, who have been missing for a short time in dimly lighted groves or dusky conservatories, and who, intimate as they seemed to have been earlier in the evening, return to the full blaze of the salon, or ball-room, by different doors, affecting to look perfectly unconscious of their mutual, although (if well managed) not simultaneous disappearance.

The arrival of Dumbledore put an end to all embarrassment; his noise and laughter, and his pinching Lucetta's taper waist, declaring that her figure, wasp-like as it was, was all natural—everything natural “‘*quicquid in Luce est*,’ as old Senna has it,”—got rid of anything like awkwardness, and they went to dinner, Peregrine still having the honour of escorting Mrs. Dumbledore down the ladder, who, during the descent, made sideways on account of her size, said to him, in a whisper, “*You should have taken the widow to-day; you have won her—you should wear her.*”

Peregrine bowed, with a look at the lady, meaning, “Oh, you know, do you?” Lucetta, who followed, and being one of the little pitchers that have long ears, heard, and said to herself, “I know too.”

“ And so to dinner with what appetite we may ! ”

The course, or courses, as it may be, of this meal, went on much as usual—enlightened and enlivened by Dumbledore, who desired mashed potatoes (after his housekeeper's fashion) to be handed to Mrs. Mimminy, as “*mo'lia parata*,” and pressed her himself to take what he called some of the “*Jellydi fontes*,” that being a trembling portion of Curaçoa jelly; having moreover

persuaded her to drink a glass of Hock—which she hated—by reminding her—which she did not quite comprehend—that the field-marshal, as he called him, pronounces that the drinking “*Hock, est vivere bis.*”

During all this turbulent monologue, the looks exchanged between the triumphant Peregrine and the conscious widow were curious, and would have been amusing to any casual visitor; to Lucetta, who, as we have already mentioned, was particularly well versed in the language of eyes,—what she saw was—

“ Confirmation strong as proof of holy writ.”

And when the “ladies” went upstairs, the young heiress retired to bed, and sent down word to “ma,” that she had a dreadfully bad headache. So Page returned to ma’s room, where Lucetta always slept, to encourage her ma’s timidity, and having ordered some slight refection, proceeded to read to the young lady a portion of some just published novel, until, as might reasonably be supposed, young Crinoline fell asleep.

It so happened that Mrs. Dumbledore had no opportunity of communicating all she knew of the proposal and acceptance to her loquacious husband; so that when he and Peregrine were left alone in the parlour, *he*, of course, *could* not open the subject, and Peregrine doubted whether he *should*—being ignorant—save and except as to the hint given him by the fair and calculating hostess, as they came downstairs, that his gentle victim had opened her heart to that lady, and so the matter stood over to the following day.

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## CHAPTER XII.

WHEN Uncle Noll’s letter reached the Tavistock Hotel, that worthy wight was “not at home.” It seems that when he visited the metropolis, he was in the habit of varying the ordinary routine of his life, by dividing his time between his club; the theatre, of which he was exceedingly fond; the social dinners of any of his remaining old friends, who were pleased to invite him; and a sort of suburban semi-rurality; a retreat in which he was wont to pass one or two days in every week, but where

located not even his own confidential man knew. It was generally understood that some old school-fellow, retired from the world, perhaps in no prosperous circumstances, claimed this attention, which Oliver Bunce paid him without subjecting him to the remarks of others of his contemporaries. Some of the servants, who were aware of the proceeding, went so far as to say that it was his brother, who in early life had committed some excesses which had driven him from society, and who had long been reported dead, whom he visited ; but it was generally believed, that whether friend or relative, the object of his solicitude must be a priest, or person exceedingly pious ; inasmuch as Oliver, who never missed church twice a day when at home, or the evening lecture when there was one, invariably passed the Saturday and Sunday with his friend out of town.

It may seem strange, as no doubt his faithful servant Limpus (who, bearing the same Christian name as himself—Oliver—he always called, “O. Limpus hight”) had taken all imaginable pains to discover the “shady blest retreat,” whither his master so regularly and periodically retired, that he had not succeeded in making the discovery. Noll, the master, however, had evidently some strong reason for baffling the attempts of the inquisitive. His mode of departing upon these hebdomadal excursions, was, like most other acts of his life, eccentric ; his portable wardrobe, upon these occasions, consisted of one shirt, one night-cap, and a minute leatheren case, containing a strop, razor, shaving-brush, and tooth-brush ; and these, so collected together, were deposited in one of his coat-pockets. Provided with this store, and armed with an umbrella, he would walk down to the shore of the river Thames at Hungerford Market, call a waterman, and tell him to pull up the river.

Having given these orders—wholly inconsequential to listeners (if there had been any), away he went, keeping as good a look-out astern as ever fresh-water sailor did, in order to assure himself that he was not “chased.” When he reached Chelsea or its vicinity, he would order the man to pull ashore. Sometimes at the Old Swan ; at another time at the Yorkshire Grey ; but seldom twice at the same place. And if he had by any accident gotten hold for a second time of the same waterman, he would order him to the Red House on the opposite bank, where he “heard there was pigeon-match to come off.” Upon which occasion he would wait until he saw the slice of melon, called a wherry, in which he had been pulled up, well on its way back to Hungerford before he stirred ; and then the chances were, that

he would walk along the Surrey bank all along to Battersea, and cross the river by the bridge.

It so happened that Peregrine was wholly ignorant of these strange proceedings, a knowledge of which would have imbued him with some apprehension, that the object of his uncle's attentive respect and veneration might somehow interfere with his hopes and expectations of provision; but as Noll had pretty plainly expressed himself upon the point, he might have felt tolerably sure that nothing would seriously mar his prospects if he behaved himself properly, as regarded his inheritance; but had he been aware of their mysterious disappearance, his anxiety would have been much greater than it ever was at not getting an answer from the worthy old gentleman to his invitation—no—he had written on the Friday. Sunday came and not a line. The fact was, Uncle Noll had boated away on Friday afternoon—cold as it was—and there lay Peregrine's letter at the Tavistock, unopened and unread.

Long before Sunday the whole affair between Peregrine and the widow, and the offer and acceptance, were notorious in the Hotel-Dumbledore; and the lover and the lady were left to themselves as much as possible; “Mrs. D.” undertaking not only to soothe but amuse Lucetta until the arrival of Miss Atkins; although the young lady seemed in a humour neither to be pleased nor tranquillized; in fact, she had expressed a determination to Page, which, if carried out, would have made a nice bit of business of it; but, short-sighted mortals that we are, Page little thought what was most likely to happen to *her*, when the governess really *did* make her appearance.

It was a great relief to Peregrine to have the *dénouement* of the affair known, so far as regarded the family circle, because he could now talk matters over with his invincible host, and open his heart to him upon points which he could not venture to touch upon in conversation with his intended; and communicate to *him* in confidence certain matters upon which they had previously communed together.

“I am sorry,” said Peregrine, after dinner on the Sunday, “that I did not get an answer from my uncle. I hate uncertainty.”

“Everything is uncertain in *this* world,” said Dumbledore; “but I think, considering the short space of time in which your negotiation has come off (as the gamblers say), *you* need not grumble.”

“Come off,” said Peregrine; “*you* talk of marriage and its

contingencies, important as they are, in sporting language. I look at such matters more seriously."

"Sport—sporting matters," said Dumbledore.—"No, no, I am no sporting man—'Non ego Mendoza,' as Ovid says.—Don't fight; shoot, I can't—put my *negaturs* on, in the season—no go then. Cock-fighting I can't bear; for, as I say with Perseus, 'In cocktum generosa pectus,'—ha! ha! ha!—and when we have been boys they often have peck't us—ha! ha! ha!"

"I don't mean *that*," said Peregrine, trying to stop him. "I never accused you of \_\_\_\_\_."

"And as for horse-racing," continued Dumbledore, "that's a matter of *course*, and *stakes* and *plates*."

"No—no—no," said Peregrine, in a louder tone than usual, "you quite mistake me; my thoughts run all upon my own peculiar position. I feel myself very strangely placed about Lucetta."

"Oh, as the old senator has it, 'quicquid in *Luce* est.' I'll talk about her—ha! ha!"

"She is an extremely quick girl—intelligent, and even accomplished—superficially," said Peregrine.

"Oh, accomplished," said Dumbledore, "I believe you; she got a prize for a water-colour drawing—done by her master, I presume—from the Society of Arts two years ago."

"A prize?" said Peregrine.

"Yes," said Dumbledore, "what Horace calls an '*Argente Pallet*'—Ha! ha! ha!"

"That, my dear friend, is not exactly my point," said the affianced Peregrine. "I am not thinking of her accomplishments so much as the precocity of her feelings, and—I may say,—passions. Within the last four-and-twenty hours, and since she has been aware of the relative position in which we are likely to stand, I have been very much stricken by her conduct; and indeed, and in conjunction with her maid Miss Page, I think—I don't know—but I am quite startled."

"Oh," said Dumbledore, "as to her forwardness in the love-line—ha! ha! ha!—don't trouble yourself about *that*. I dare say, young as she is, as Ovid has it, '*Puppies amat*',—ha! ha! ha!—What's that to *you*?"

"Still," said Peregrine, "I do assure you it would be a very great comfort and support to me, in my present position, if my uncle were to come down. I have secured rooms for him at the inn, confident in his compliance with my request."

"I think, after being used to his own comfortable house,"

said Dumbledore, "when he gets into a Brighton inn bed, you'll have him roaring out with Horace, 'Quid Fleas,'—ha! ha! ha!—come, drink your wine."

"Yes, but," said Peregrine, "if I could but get you to be serious for five minutes, it would be —"

"Serious," said Dumbledore, "ha! ha! ha! That's what you always say—why should I be serious?—that's what I ask you, as I ask myself.—'Molly meum,' as I call my Sally for shortness, knows I never cry—I look after the fun, and *she* after the money; and as I say, she is a good housewife; and 'Honi soit qui *Molly pense*',—ha! ha! ha! Let's drink her health; or no, stay, *you* shall do that,—and I'll give you the widow—that's it—only I needn't give her, for 'gad you have taken her yourself—a true bill—no kind of doubt—all settled—not a case 'quod exit in *hum*',—no—I wish you joy, old fellow, and deuced glad you came down to us;—here's Mrs. Bunce, as is to be."

"My dear friend," said Peregrine, "you have no idea of the state of nervousness in which you keep me by speaking so loud, as I said the very first day I was here; the walls of these houses are so thin, that every word you are now saying may be heard, not only upstairs, but next door."

"What then?" said Dumbledore,—"never say anything I am ashamed of—besides, my next door neighbour is my old friend Dick Hill—so, as I say, my talk is 'Vox et præterea nigh Hill,'—ha! ha! ha!—not but Mr. Dick, as I was remarking yesterday, is getting old—eh? as the poet says '*Dick age*,'—ha! ha! ha!"

"Come, come, let us go to the ladies," said Peregrine, who found, as usual, that he could get nothing like common sense out of his friend's head.

"Up to the ladies," said Dumbledore, "to be sure—'Toute sweet,' as the French say of the sugar; only you wouldn't be so ungallant as not to drink dear Mrs. D.—my old Sally."

"Certainly not," said Peregrine.

"What wine will you have as a top-up?" said Dumbledore.

"I'll take some sherry," said Peregrine.

"Do, do," said Dumbledore, "I shall drink her in '*my deary*,'—ha! ha! ha!—but as it is early, mightn't we just take a turn on the Esplanade—one cigar—eh?"

"You devote yourself too much to that infernal smoking," said Peregrine.

"I don't confine myself to smoking," said Dumbledore; "I

know the wholesomeness of the weed—I take snuff—and, between you and me and the post, in the cold winter nights, chew—ha! ha! ha!—‘*quid et nose*,’ as Horace says—ha! ha! ha!—however, perhaps you may like to fly to the regions above; so I’ll postpone my fumigations till you go home, and will take my chance of the night to enjoy your society and my cigar together in the open air.”

It may seem extraordinary to some people, that a man having achieved what was the then great object of his life, under the most agreeable and prosperous circumstances, should, as soon as he found himself secure, and it may be called triumphantly secure, feel infinitely more unhappy than he had been during the period of his uncertainty; but so assuredly felt our friend Peregrine. He had won the heart and hand (soon to follow) of the very person of all others, whose hand and heart he was most anxious to win—the prize was his own, and he was the accepted husband of the handsome widow. But, to his surprise, it was only when he had thus carried his point, that his difficulties seemed to him to begin: all the technicalities of law details were, perhaps, trifles; for, in his avowed, or rather self-admitted, and uncle-supported, character of fortune-hunter, he had settled himself at last; but then Lucetta, and all the friends of her father, were to be conciliated; and then the fear that all the surviving brothers and sisters of Mrs. Mimminy were to be known—and all *their* wives and husbands—and all their children—and all the uncles and aunts of the wives and husbands, and all *their* sons and daughters—and all *their* cousins and nephews, and nieces, and cousins-german—and all *their* great uncles and half-sisters, and half-brothers, and so on, *ad infinitum*: and of course, every one of these people had histories belonging to them; and as it appeared that Mrs. Mimminy had married her dear old Billy for his money, the chances were, that all the rest of the tribe were less profitably though perhaps more suitably settled, and, that, therefore, Peregrine would be, in uniting himself to this charming creature, marrying *financially* fifty or sixty persons, as yet entirely unknown to him: but who, as in a thousand similar cases, having, like a swarm of bees, an established hive to receive them, are, bee-like, extremely apt to sting, if they cannot procure as much honey as they happen to want from the “stock.”

Then Lucetta worried him sadly. Mrs. Mimminy, having secured him, admitted the venial deception she had played off as to the girl’s age: and although the maternal misrepresenta-

tion had obtained him one chaste salute at the outset of their acquaintance, the disclosure of the truth awakened a feeling of something exceedingly unlike satisfaction in his mind;—in two years he might have offered himself to Lucetta, without, as he thought, any serious chance of refusal;—and here he was, plighted to her mother with only a life-interest in a part of the girl's future certain fortune—and then such a girl—so pretty—so clever—and so much prettier, and grown so much more clever in his eyes and estimation during the progress of their acquaintance!

As has been before noticed, Mrs. Dumbledore undertook to take “dear” Lucetta about with her, not more with a view of keeping her away from the “loving couple,” than to separate her from Page; for Mrs. Dumbledore, who held gentle converse occasionally with her own maid, had heard something of the notions of Miss Lucetta, as to what *she* should do, if her mother really *did* marry Mr. Bunce; so that during the Sunday, except at church and at dinner, the young beauty, as Peregrine, the moment he was secure of the elder one, thought her, had not any frequent opportunities of conversation with her intended father-in-law.

The next day—Monday—would settle the matter; and even if Page were not so promptly removed, the superior influence of Miss Atkins, of whom Lucetta, with all her vivacity, and the provocation she fancied she had received, could not make a dear friend and intimate *confidante*, in less than a fortnight, would set all things to rights; because, by Lady Dulcibella Damtuff's account of her, Miss Atkins was something unparalleled and unequalled in the history of first-rate governesses.

How matters mend—not when they are at the worst—but when one thinks they are going the way which a man wishes them to go! Peregrine, whose nervousness, much like that of all braggarts, whether in love or war, increased as time wore on, and who really *had* worried himself into a state of excitement, which he in vain endeavoured to conceal from his gentle widow and bride elect, was all at once cheered, charmed, astonished, and delighted, by the unexpected appearance of Uncle Noll, who, on returning to London from his weekly task of pious duty, found Peregrine's letter in the morning, and forthwith ordered a pair of horses to his carriage, in which he had originally travelled to town, and hurrying Limpus in packing up, started from the Tavistock (which the said Limpus invariably called The Cab-

bage-stalk) Hotel in Covent Garden, and reached the Old Ship, at Brighton, just as his hopeful nephew had finished dressing for dinner.

The music of the spheres could not have been more harmonious to the ears of Peregrine, than the well-known sound of Uncle Noll's voice, inquiring after his nephew—it was everything to him—support, consolation, comfort. His presence in the family circle would give him confidence and respectability, and moreover his advice in mere worldly matters would be invaluable, when the time came for the trustees, and the brothers and sisters, and all the ark-like community of the relations of his intended, to make their appearance. Not a moment did he lose in hurrying downstairs to welcome his kind relation; and although there was no sitting-room actually prepared for him, he secured him one all ready to his hand, in which a cheerful fire crackled his welcome.

"Well, Peregrine," said Noll,—“didn't expect me, I suppose—could not write—so I came—glad of your news—wish you joy—small glass of brandy, just to drive out the cold—and then—hey?—where does your friend live?—when does he dine?”

"I will escort you, my dear sir," said Peregrine,—“and you have no great deal of time to lose; however, of this I am quite sure, you need not stand upon the ceremony of dressing—the lateness of your arrival is quite sufficient apology.”

"I should think so," said Noll,—“if your friend won't take a man in boots at dinner in a November night, he won't do for *me*. I shall just refresh myself—a wash and a change—eh?—well but, I say, Perry, shut the door—there you Limpus, mind—wait—tell them to show you my bedroom, and I'll ring when I want you—take care there; a good fire there—go." Limpus went.—“And now—I say, Perry,—are you all fast—safe—sure, snug,—no slip-knots—no loop-holes—got *her* consent as well as your own?”

"As I told you in my letter, my dear uncle, so it is," said Peregrine, "I am a happy man—indeed the agitation in which I have lived since the termination of my doubts and fears, has quite bewildered me."

"Gad, then," said Noll, "as the old joke goes, you are two men—a man beside yourself. But why flurry and worry? if you've hooked your fish—bagged your bird—there's an end of all doubt. I say—is she prettier than Margy—wittier than Dory?"

"If you love me, my dear uncle," said Peregrine, "do not recall those names to my mind; and above all, do not, in any fit

of raillery against me, glance at the sequel of Twigglesford, at Dumbledore's."

"Hey," said Noll,—"what, not the bugle-horn?"

"Oh no, no."

"Nor the parson's pet?"

"Nothing, my dear uncle, nothing," said Poor Peregrine, who, when restored by his presence to a more perfect recollection of the delight his eccentric uncle took in what *he* called rowing him, began almost to repent having sent for him. However, Peregrine was right in his calculation; it was wise to bring the old gentleman forward; his wealth and position in life would, as he foresaw, substantiate his nephew's claims, and present to the friends and relations of the widow a character to which they could not object; and more especially was it important, as regarded the opinions of the trustees; for it had been made quite evident to Peregrine during the last twenty-four hours, that Lucetta was perfectly prepared to go any lengths to prevent her mother's marriage with *him*; and aided as she was by Page, he was not at all easy as to the probable success of her machinations.

Uncle Noll speedily despatched his preparations for starting;—he had never before been at Brighton, and his ideas of its size and extent were consequently exceedingly erroneous; and as for the technicalities of that town, he was in utter ignorance; for when preparing for the march to Dumbledore's, a shower of rain suddenly falling, Peregrine told one of the waiters to go to the door and see if he could catch *a fly*; the old gentleman exclaimed, with mingled indignation and surprise, "Hey—what!—Perry, set a man to catch a fly in a November night!—and for what?—hey—Perry, my boy, you *must* be very far gone."

"No, no, my dear uncle," said Peregrine, "not so bad as that—this is a way we *have* here." However, Noll seemed to feel rather uneasy; but his astonishment was run up to fever-heat, when the man came in, to say that he was sure the Duke of Richmond, or the Marquis of Anglesea, would be back on the stand almost directly.

"Who, sir?" said Uncle Noll to the waiter.

"They are the two blue flies, sir," said the waiter.

"The Marquis—the what—the Duke!"—stammered the old gentleman,—"two noblemen of such high rank, qualities, and character, to be called blue flies, by such a white-faced, whipper-snapper of a—I—hcy—gad! I'll not stop in this house another minute!"

" My dear uncle," said Peregrine, " let me explain—so far from disrespect, the names of noblemen are now given to flies, as a tribute of applause and affection ; and—"

" But what d'ye mean by flies ? " said Noll.

Peregrine, assisted by the waiter, proceeded to enlighten the old gentleman upon this point, and, as luck would have it, their explanatory lecture was happily illustrated by the seasonable arrival at the door of one of the carriages in question.

" Hey, gad," said Noll, quite charmed when he was satisfied that no disrespect was intended to the aristocracy, " so that's a fly now—hey—why then, as the old joke goes, ' looking for a fly in Hyde Park,' is no such nonsense as it used to be—hey ? " and thus good humour having been restored, the affectionate pair were dragged with the wind right ahead to the scene of their future festivity.

It will not be worth while to recount all the details of presentation, introduction, hand-shaking, smile-exchanging, which took place upon the occasion. Suffice it to say, that Noll seemed to think that he ought to be privileged to give his future niece a chaste salute, but which, rather overpowered by her retiring timidity, he did not perpetrate ; but on turning round to Peregrine, he was heard by all the party to ejaculate, in what may be called a stage whisper, " You are a lucky dog, Perry."

Again was the family circle formed round the dinner-table, the procession to which, however, was marshalled in a different manner than heretofore. Noll took Mrs. Dumbledore, and Peregrine handed down the widow ; Dumbledore acting beau to Lucetta, who certainly was not in one of her best humours ; however, the ill temper of one individual had but little chance against the inveterate joyousness of Noll and his host, who kept up a fire of words during the repast.

Peregrine, who was most anxious to make the certainty of his success evident to his uncle, by the manner in which he conversed with the widow, and the exhibition of certain little delicate attentions which he paid her during dinner, her returns to, and acknowledgment of which, could not fail to satisfy the old gentleman of his nephew's security, could nevertheless scarcely keep his eyes from gazing on the girl. The expression of her countenance was totally changed from that which heretofore had characterized it, by, as it appeared to Peregrine, the feeling that she was an heiress, and that she ought not, with *her* fortune, to have been left under her mother's control as to *her* marrying, while her mother was at liberty to do exactly as she

pleased ; but that expression was again varied by the anxiety with which she listened to the sound of the wheels of every carriage that passed the house. Miss Atkins was to arrive by one of the London coaches ; and although the Times had been suggested to her, she might have started by some earlier conveyance, and therefore might arrive sooner. Mrs. Dumbledore went on talking as usual, and somewhere about seven o'clock, the conversation having subsided into a lull, the ladies retired.

"I think, sir," said Oliver Bunce to Dumbledore, "if all I hear is true, and all I see I may believe, this gentleman, who honours me by calling me uncle, is not much to be pitied."

"I may say ditto to that," said Dumbledore ; "and what's better still, the more you know of the lady, the more you'll like her."

"I assure you, Mr. Dumbledore," said Oliver, "I haven't been so happy for a long time as I am to-day. Peregrine's roving disposition will now be cured ; for, as the old song goes,—

"Here ev'ry flower's united."

"I am not conscious of roving," said Peregrine, mightily afraid of irritating the humorous raillery of his uncle, but at the same time anxious to repel the insinuations he had just ventured.

"Oh come, come," said Noll, "no tales out of school ; but as I tell him, Mr. Dumbledore, marriage will settle him—how old now, d'ye call the lady ?"

"Delicate question," said Peregrine, "I have never ventured to inquire very minutely—thirty or so, perhaps."

"Thirty," said Dumbledore ;—"Forty si necesse est,'—ha ! ha ! ha !—Split the difference—say five-and-thirty."

"The daughter is very pretty," said Oliver,—"she seems fidgety—eh ?—and restless."

"That," said Peregrine, "is merely an anxiety to see the young lady to whose care she is to be consigned this evening."

"Well, well," said Oliver, "settle it all your own way ; and as far as I can contribute to the arrangement and your comfort here, I am ready for you ; you may say, Peregrine, of me, as the old story goes, 'Nunkyn pays for me,' and I'll drink a bumper of our worthy friend's excellent port wine to your health and happiness."

Peregrine and Dumbledore (especially the former, as may naturally be believed) were delighted with the warmth and cordiality of the old gentlemen, who, having drunk the toast,

declared that he would have no talking on business till the next day, and, drawing his chair close to the fire, continued enjoying himself until the usual summons arrived for the drawing-room.

"Perhaps," said Dumbledore, "if our new young lady is not over-fatigued with her journey, we shall have a little music to-night. I'm told she is a first-rate on the harp."

"So much the better," said Oliver, "more domestic harmony : come then, let us join the dear creatures above—we ought to have pity upon Peregrine—hey gad—come, my Benedict elect."

So playfully patting his dutiful nephew on the shoulder, the jovial old gentleman proceeded to mount the stairs, followed by his two companions, and the instant he saw the glance from Mrs. Mimminy's eye with which his nephew was greeted, he gave one of the little grunts with which he was wont quaintly to express his satisfaction, and seated himself on the sofa next her, in order to improve his acquaintance with her.

This arrangement militated very seriously against Dumbledore's design of improving the acquaintance of Uncle Noll, in whose joyous laugh and ready—apprehension perhaps is not the best word—enjoyment of his absurdities, this worthy block-head felt infinite pleasure, and the delightful certainty that they should eventually become excellent friends. As it was, Dumbledore was obliged to content himself with announcing to Peregrine the arrival by the mail of some clothes from Nugee, with a "Ha, *Nugee do send in maila*," and an observation upon there having been a good deal of lightning, which, having been unaccompanied with thunder, he called the "*Dumb flamas Jovi*."

Miss Lucetta, who had not yet made her appearance in the drawing-room, but who was no doubt in council with her, "pretty Page," entered the circle, and communicated to her ma, that it was quite time the Times should have reached Brighton, and inquired whether some servant ought not to be sent to Castle Square, to ascertain the arrival of that coach ; to which Mrs. Dumbledore gave a satisfactory answer, that the Times would bring any passenger to *their* door, which would save, at least, one-and-ninepence in porterage and fly-hire.

Of course this financial explanation satisfied the young lady, who sat down at a table by herself, and turned over some prints and pamphlets which were lying upon it. Peregrine went over to her, and said something to her, of which she seemed to take no notice ; and Mrs. Dumbledore was worried very much by noticing her manner towards him, because everybody knows

that hate grows, like love, by juxtaposition: and that these two people starting together in *their* relative situations in life, with disliking each other, or with a dislike on the one side, which was sure to engender a dislike on the other, was most disagreeable, if not dangerous. It, however, was in vain that Peregrine attempted to make himself agreeable. Lucetta was downright sulky, and carried her sulkiness to the extent of excessive ill-breeding; for when she found her future father-in-law somewhat pertinacious, in his attempts to obtain an audience, she hastily shut up the book in which she pretended to be absorbed, and walked out of the room, to rejoin Page, and, in all probability, to inform her of Peregrine's insidious attempts at conciliation.

It was just at this moment that a rattling crashing of wheels, with a dead stop at the door, and a violent ringing at the house-bell, announced an arrival.

"Hey gad," said Noll, "somebody come—hey—that sounds like an omnibus."

"No, no," said Dumbledore, "*'nemo mortalium omnibus'*—nobody comes here in an omnibus—no, no—this is the Times, no doubt—fast coach, and sure—*'tempus fugit'*,—ha! ha! ha! Miss Atkins—here, Lucetta—where are you?"

Lucetta, actuated perhaps more by curiosity than any other feeling at the moment, was too anxious to see Miss Atkins to require a second summons—down she came, differently indeed in manner from that in which she made her first descent to Peregrine, and close behind her, "paging her heels," Miss Page, whose desire to catch a glimpse of the new-comer was nearly as strong as that of the young lady, but with perhaps more interested motives than those by which the said young lady was excited. Her hope was, that Miss Atkins would turn out a hideous skinny frump; cold, cross, and ceremonious, rigidly frigid, and sourly sanctified; so that the more than budding Lucetta would take a decided disgust to her, and throw herself into *her* arms as her supporter against oppression.

Page was just the person to wish this, and to do all that might result from the fulfilment of her wishes; and had just got far enough into Lucetta's confidence to have almost made her hope that Miss Atkins might be odious and disagreeable, so that she might thwart her, and take Page—one of the most artful, playful, and pretty things of her age and station—for her confidante, councillor, and future conspirator, against the governess.

It is odd enough, but certainly true, that to persons of strong

feelings and sensitive minds, an arrival, let it be what it may, is always exciting ; the present arrival was naturally more exciting than the ordinary approach of a governess would be, inasmuch as Mrs. Mimminy looked forward to her aid, as the support which she was to have against the *tracasseries* of Lucetta ; and Peregrine was quite man of the world enough to know how very much would depend upon where the influence over the governess was to exist. Noll did not relish the disturbance, which, of course, caused the widow, the leading character in the drama, to leave his side, in order to receive the treasure which had been consigned to her by the Lady Dulcibella Damtuff. In fact, it was a break-in, and a break-up : however, Mrs. Mimminy's anxiety to see Miss Atkins was most natural, and so she hurried out ; and then came the thumping of trunks in the passage of the house, and the ordinary banging of doors, and all the gabbling which necessarily takes place upon such an occasion, and then Miss Atkins was graciously received by Mrs. Mimminy ; and then she was ushered upstairs to her room by Lucetta, who appeared to like her more than Page seemed to approve of ; and then she went and "took off her things" (whatever that means), and then "would she have anything to eat and drink?" and the "no, she had dined at Crawley ;" and then, "would she come into the drawing-room ?—nobody but the family ;" and then came the "oh do, Miss Atkins," from Lucetta ; and so Mrs. Mimminy desired Lucetta, when Miss Atkins chose, to bring her down and present her.

And then Lucetta looked at Miss Atkins, and, instead of a frump, she found *she was* an exceedingly nice person. Mrs. Mimminy, at first sight, thought her rather *too* nice ; however, much to Page's dismay, it seemed quite clear that Lucetta was very highly pleased with her ; and she looked so pretty, and the journey had flushed her ; and then she kissed Lucetta, just as if she had known her for a thousand years, and Lucetta said to herself, "I know I shall like *you*." And so she entreated her to come down to the drawing-room ; and in the midst of their entreaties, Mrs. Dumbledore came up, and *she* made friends with Miss Atkins, and was quite satisfied by the "things" she had on, and after taking her "things" off, that she was a very superior person ; and so *she* added her entreaties to Lucetta's, that she would join the party below, which she accordingly agreed to do ; Page looking at her, as she held a light to show the way, as if she could have poisoned her, conscious that the lady, who evidently was of her own school, but in a much higher degree, would win the young lady entirely to herself from *her*.

Just as they descended to the drawing-room, our worthy, impenetrable, and woolly-headed Dumbledore was denouncing the Italian opera.

"Pay, sir," said he to Noll, "pay for going to the opera!—not I—if any lady lets me go to her box—I go; but to pay—no, no—hearing it is enough, as our old friend Horace says, 'Audire est *operae pretium*'—as for the pit—gad—I'd as soon sit in a pigsty—the 'Iter *pigrorum*.'—Ha! ha! ha!"

At this juncture in walked Mrs. Mimminy, Mrs. Dumbledore, Miss Lucetta, and Miss Atkins. Up started old Noll, whose gallantry was as elastic at sixty-two as it had been at thirty. Dumbledore also was on his legs. Peregrine, who was standing still, looking over the prints on the table, merely turned himself round as the young lady entered the room—their eyes met.

"Gracious heaven!" said Miss Atkins;—"Peregrine!"

"The devil!" cried Peregrine, "Kitty Cathederal?"

"Yes—yes," said the governess,—"send for a policeman—send for—oh! oh!"—And down went Miss Atkins, Lady Dulcibella Damtuff's accomplished governess, in a fit, flat on the floor.

"What's all this?" said Noll.

"Why, sir," said Dumbledore, "it is what the French call a *Bully verseyment*."

"What does it mean?" said Mrs. Mimminy.

"Ha! ha! ha!" said Lucetta.

"What are *you* laughing at?" said Mrs. Dumbledore; "if there's anything wrong, your mother will have to pay the young person's fare back to London."

"What is it all about?" said Dumbledore—"eh?"

Hereabouts Mrs. Mimminy felt it due to her delicacy to faint also; so down she went on the sofa—Dumbledore was about to attempt to relieve her, by throwing some water in her face.

"D." screamed Mrs. Dumbledore, "mind what you are about—damask sofa-cover—water—cost you five pounds, at least—here, give me a pen, I'll tickle her nose—mind, don't give me a new one."

"Ha! ha! ha!" again went Lucetta.

"Perry, Perry, Perry," said Noll,—"explain—explain—what is all this?"

"I can explain nothing here, my dear uncle," said Peregrine: "this is most unexpected—I thought—but—never mind—we may set it all to rights in the morning—at present we had better go—yes, yes, I am quite serious—let the young person tell he

own story—I am unequal to the task—I really am in a very unpleasant—I cannot—”

“ Why, Perry,” said Noll, “ you—eh gad—what, is this a true bill?—what does it mean?”

“ I will tell you all,” said Peregrine, “ but, Mr. Dumbledore, I feel that I ought to leave your house immediately—this lady—in fact—”

“ Oh Mr. Bunce,” said Lucetta, “ what a man you *are*;”—and if anything could have completed the annihilation of our hero, it was the triumphant look of the girl, who saw the consummation in one moment of all her objects—*his* dismissal, and the rejection of the governess, who, as the reader may more than suspect, had been a *particularly* intimate friend of the flirting, flattering Peregrine, while bearing a name which she had changed, in order to get rid of the stigma under which she had laboured in consequence of that very intimacy.

Never, to be sure, did bubble burst more suddenly or unexpectedly than this evening party. Never did the members of any circle find themselves so soon upset, separated, and half-killed: amongst the the most turbulent and certainly most dissatisfied was old Oliver Bunce; because not only was he doubly interested, negatively and positively, by the position of his favourite nephew; but because he had been, to speak figuratively, almost dragged out of his bed, to hurry from the Tavistock Hotel in Covent Garden, to the Ship Inn at Brighton, in the county of Sussex, for no other purpose than to be a living witness of the disgrace of the said nephew—his consequent denunciation by Miss Katherine Atkins—and of the entire prostration of the scheme, enterprise, and undertaking, which the aforesaid Peregrine had, by his intelligence, talents, virtue, and accomplishments, just brought to its happy conclusion.

The scene was really lamentable—Mrs. Mimminy was carried to her room, exhibiting only consciousness sufficient to make the most furious resistance to any attempt of Peregrine to be civil. Miss Atkins, *alias* Catheral, was conveyed by one of the footmen, and Page, to *her* roost, sobbing and weeping most sadly; Mrs. Dumbledore superintending both *requiems*, so as to prevent any damage to the furniture. Dumbledore stood staring about him in dismay, unable even to joke, and Noll, at last consenting to abdicate, in company with his discomfited relation, made active preparations for his departure.

After the sobbing had subsided, all was silence; but as Noll and Peregrine were descending the stairs, in a state scarcely to

be described, Lucetta put her head over the balusters, and said, in a voice which rang in Peregrine's ears most discordantly, "Good night, Mr. Bunce!—I suppose we shan't see you here to-morrow—ha! ha! ha!"

Dumbledore accompanied them to the hall, and—being really, with all his stupidity, a kind-hearted man, having always liked Peregrine, and now liking the uncle—felt deeply about all that had happened; for although not very sharp, he was sufficiently alive to things in general, to conclude in his own mind that the screamings and exclamations, which had been so plentiful must mean something too serious to be overlooked. However, they shook hands, and when they departed—the night was cold—the wind blew, and Noll did not at all relish facing the breeze—however, as the parting was unpremeditated, and the circumstances were strange, Dumbledore again bade adieu to his friends, so unexpectedly expelled; and upon Noll's observing that it was a bitter night, Dumbledore wound up his connection with them with one of his worst jokes: "Yes," said he; "the air is a '*nigger* and a *nipping*,' as Shakspeare says,—and as I said to one of my father's slaves, when I caught him cutting plantains in one of our plantations." These, as far as the Bunces went, "were the last words of Dumbledore."

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### CHAPTER XIII.

THERE is an old proverb, or saying, which, as indicative of a failure, pronounces that "all the fat is in the fire." In these days of delicate literature, it might perhaps be better and more suitably rendered, by saying that all the obesity of the animal has been subdued by the caloric; but put it which way we please, there can be no doubt, let the real history of Kitty Catheral turn out how it may, that our hopeful Peregrine has been finally ejected from the Mimminy circle. Indeed, the following note, received in the morning from Dumbledore, seems to be decisive.—

"**MY DEAR SIR,**—It is extremely painful to write this—but, after what happened last night, we cannot receive you here—nor your uncle Noll, as you call him. I liked him—to me he was a

regular ‘*Nolli me tangere*’—I took to him vastly, but the game is up ; my widow and the governess have had their say out—you must not show—Miss Atkins was bundled off by the first coach this morning—so, hoping that you and I may meet some time or another hereafter, I remain

“Yours obediently,  
“J. DUMBLEDORE.

“P.S.—We could not get rid of Miss Atkins by any means till I had given her your address in London. It seems to me that it is ‘redress’ she wants—she says she has been used very ungenteelly—that she never could find you—and that you know her attorney has got a writ of *Fi-Fi* against you, if he could but find you.—I said to Mrs. D., I was afraid it was a writ of *Fie, Fie*.—Ha! ha!—Adieu.”

This missive of dismission was annihilation—no doubt in the world remained, but that his old friend Kitty, who he believed was settled with a family in France, had betrayed all her own secrets, in revenge for his conduct towards her. They had been exceedingly intimate. Peregrine had succeeded in rendering her what she too truly was, by promising her marriage. He procrastinated—delayed—demurred—suggested—referred to his uncle’s advanced age, his great expectations, and so on, until at last he threw off the mask, and admitted that he had no intention whatever of fulfilling his engagement. They parted—and Katherine, who, with all a woman’s softness, loved him even for his faults, would have been contented to take another situation, and devote her talents to the assiduous cultivation of the opening minds of her young pupils, without marrying, if Peregrine’s cruelty had ended there ; but no—from the moment of their separation, he had never inquired after her, written to her, nor in the slightest degree interested himself about her ; nor did he know that, from reasons important to herself, as regarded her own family and connections, at least such of them as were aware of her indiscretion, she had changed her name, just about the time that Mr. Peregrine Bunce *happened* to change his residence, without leaving word with his landlord whither he was moving, or where he might be heard of.

What he had last heard was the truth. She had gone to France ; and there (having credentials from two or three families in which, until she unluckily met with our hero, she had been creditably and honourably exerting her faculties, and communi-

cating her accomplishments), her family advisers recommended—whether for their own sakes, or hers, we cannot pretend to determine—that she should assume another name, and the character of a young widow; for which they might perhaps have had some better reasons than at first strike one—and so she became Mrs. Atkins—"her husband, whom she had improvidently married, had been in the navy, and had fallen a victim at the early age of twenty-six, to the noxious climate of Sierra Leone." This was the history got up by the Catherals.

When she made an application to superintend the education of the amiable daughter of Lady Dulcibella Damtuff, her ladyship was quite charmed with her—her letters of recommendation were entirely satisfactory, and she entered upon the duty of idea-shooting under the most favorable circumstances, one condition only being made by Lady Dulcibella; that she should drop the *Mistress*, and consent to be called *Miss Atkins*. Her youthful appearance—her manners, &c. &c. &c. fully justified it, and her ladyship—why, perhaps her ladyship could scarcely tell—*would have her to be Miss Atkins*.

She had most successfully carried her young charge through a two years' course of education, until the young lady came with her mamma and governess to London, to be married to Monsieur Le Comte Henri Philogène Théodore Alphonse Chaumontelle; when, of course, Miss Atkins was no longer wanted to teach the young lady anything, and accordingly answered Mrs. Mimminy's advertisement for a governess, which appeared in the Morning Post.

But now comes the black bit of this business, as regards Peregrine Bunce; and which part, having told all else that *he* knew of the history of Kitty Catheral to Uncle Noll, he did *not* think it *proper* or prudent to mention.

The less one enters into particulars in such cases, the better for all parties; but in writing history, we must not omit important facts, even if we feel that they ought to be touched delicately. During the blissful days of Peregrine's acquaintance with Katherine, sundry expenses had been incurred, for which he had unquestionably rendered himself responsible—if not legally, at least morally; and so the poor girl understood, and so did the persons to whom she—for his sake—had become indebted. A surgeon and apothecary, a nurse, an upholsterer, a linen warehouseman, a wine-merchant, a butcher, a baker, a grocer, and lastly, an undertaker; all had claims upon her. All these claims he had faithfully pledged himself to discharge; but still she was the ostensible creditor, and when she talked of the wit of "Fi Fa," upon which the

indomitable Dumbledore quibbled, she quoted, or rather misquoted, some announcement made to her by a low dirty attorney, to whom she had applied on her return to England, in order to relieve her from the difficulties and dangers to which, upon her arrival, she felt herself exposed. This course of proceeding many people may think resembles that which the old proverb calls “jumping out of the fryingpan into the fire.” Alas, Peregrine, with all his cunning, had so carefully contrived to manage his *affaire de cœur*, that no writ of *Fi Fa*, or *Ca Sa*, or any other writ, should ever touch him on account of poor Kitty Catheral.

It must be confessed that Dumbledore's announcement, of his having imparted to *Miss Atkins née Catheral*, the place of his residence, was to his selfish mind one of the greatest immediate evils. In all probability, a hundred and fifty or two hundred pounds would have settled all these demands, and the “gay deceiver” would, by paying them, have done something to modify his original criminality; but no: his first determination on the subject was only strengthened by the frustration of his hopes of aggrandisement consequent upon the unexpected appearance of his once loved—or, at least once sought—victim; and he resolved, that she should still be subject to all the ills and inconveniences of her embarrassments, in revenge for the mischief which she had done him in his last great enterprise.

With all his low cunning, with all his boasted knowledge of human nature, enlightened too as he must have been as to the character of his uncle by an almost constant residence with him, he did *not* know, and had not courage to try the experiment, that if, having told him as much of the history of his connection with Kitty, as he in his worldly wisdom considered amply sufficient, he had told him all,—the chances—not to say the certainty—would have been, that Noll would have given him a check for the whole amount of the debts due. Peregrine had yet to learn the tenderness and susceptibility of his uncle's heart—of his devotion to the “fair sex,” as the cockneys call women—and his inherent disposition to do good; and even by an excess, perhaps, of benevolence, a stronger anxiety to do good, and be of service where misfortune unforeseen, innocence betrayed, or indiscretion repented of, were the causes of the calamity, which his circumstances enabled him, when he thought proper, to succour and relieve.

But no—not a word of the young woman's pecuniary difficulties: a mention of those, Peregrine thought would touch the old gentleman's pocket: a detail of them would induce an explanation of their various characters and qualities; in fact, neither

would he deprive himself of the money to save her, nor would he risk his uncle's good opinion by obtaining it from *him*; and in this mood he contented himself by urging the old gentleman to start for town immediately after the receipt of Dumbledore's letter; although Noll, who, as the reader always knows, had never been at Brighton before, was exceedingly anxious to see some of the humours of the place, and enjoy himself for a few days in a participation in the pleasures with which Peregrine and Dumbledore had assured him it abounded at that season of the year.

However, Peregrine, who certainly had—as indeed the old gentleman's visit to the coast proved—a strong influence over his uncle, succeeded in persuading him to accede to his wish of getting back to London as soon as possible; and at all events (if he could manage it) before Kitty Cathederal could have time to let loose her six-and-eight-penny friend upon him, at his then residence, whence his intention was to decamp instantaneously without beat of drum.

That Uncle Oliver was grievously annoyed, not only by the defeat of his nephew which had occurred, but by having been almost compulsorily made a witness of it, is not to be doubted; nor did the cold-blooded disingenuousness of Peregrine, in misrepresenting the facts of the case, tend to soothe him. All, however, that he exhibited in the way of irritation, was his expression of surprise that Perry, as he called him, should not have trusted him with the whole affair before; just as if Perry—nice man—had trusted him with half of it, *then*.

Upon poor Mrs. Mimminy, the explosion had a very serious effect. She liked Mr. Peregrine Bunce;—he, moreover, had made her believe that he liked—nay, loved—her; she had confided all her secrets to *him*—made his bosom the depository of all her amiable weaknesses, little suspecting the sort of man she had to deal with;—nor, to say truth of it, had it not been for the influence of Mrs. Dumbledore, would it have been at all impossible for her to have forgiven the indiscretion of which he had been shown to have been guilty in regard to Miss Atkins; but Mrs. Dumbledore's rigorous vigorous virtue took such umbrage upon the occasion, that the timid Mrs. Mimminy had not a word to say in his defence; nor had she nerve enough to stand the increasing irony of Miss Lucetta, who scarcely ceased laughing from the time she last took leave of Peregrine till he and his uncle had taken leave of Brighton, which they did at about twelve o'clock on the Tuesday.

Now it so happened that Mr. Peregrine Bunce, anxious as we

know he was to shake off the trammels of his London lodgings, had frequently promised some acquaintances of his, residing in the neighbourhood of London, and within some twelve or thirteen miles of that sink of sin and sea-coal, to pay them a visit; and the present, in the fertility of his imaginative mind, he thought would be an exceedingly good opportunity to fulfil the engagement. He therefore determined, as soon as he had deposited his uncle at his hotel, to hurry to his lodgings, get his "things" packed up, place such trunks as he might not immediately want, in security, and start without delay to the neighbourhood of his friend's residence, the precise locality of which, prudential reasons, and perhaps an almost needless delicacy, induces the historian not to disclose.

To say that it was in Surrey is not to say much—nor much more, to add that it was a fine-looking house—stone fronted, with pediment, columns, flights of steps leading to a sloping lawn, washed by a silver stream—or rather by a greenish pond, borrowed from the stream, and dammed up into a sort of little lake. Well-trimmed plantations gave at once an air of security from the northern and eastern winds, and convinced the spectator that the master of the place had an eye to the "neat," as well as the "picturesque." Peacocks were to be seen perching on plaster balustrades,—a boat was moored on the "canal," which was moreover illustrated by two swans, who, whenever any accident happened to the lock by which the majesty of the flood was maintained, went high-and-dry aground, and were forced to land themselves on the lawn for fear o swan-wreck.

The owner of this Paradise was the celebrated merchant, Mr. Joseph Nobbatop—head of the great firm of Nobbatop, Snaggs, and Widdlebury—a house famous all over the world for something which, to the uninitiated in mercantile matters, is wholly inexplicable. They dealt in everything, and seemed to deal in nothing—whether it were tallow, tea, treacle, tin, or turmeric—salt, silk, sugar, saffron, or saltpetre, nobody who visited Mr. Nobbatop's splendid mansion ever could ascertain. He was "a merchant," and there's an end: and what can be a higher or nobler character than a merchant of the first city in the world—and so we *will* call London, in spite of any charge of nationality—particularly in business.

Mr. Nobbatop's turtle never tasted of tallow—Mr. Nobbatop's venison never smelt of saffron—neither were his *entrées* seasoned with saltpetre—nor did treacle interfere with the cookery of his

second course. He was wealthy beyond calculation—his wife was agreeable, and in the way of family he had one son, and one niece, whom he had adopted as his daughter. Nobbatop, as to person, was in figure short, in face pale, his eyes quick and intelligent; but with all his benevolent disposition and admirable temper, his heart was not always in his own keeping—in company with his thoughts, it was eternally fixed and settled amongst his books in his counting-house; and although, whenever the conversation took a turn towards the subjects which he best understood, and in which he was the most interested, he became animated, and even eloquent, it was clear to those who knew him, that relaxation from his daily business did not afford his mind much relief.

In his ordinary intercourse with society, there was an evenness of manner which, with strangers, might pass for reserve; but he was capable of noble actions, and performed them too, without appearing to sympathize with anybody on the face of the earth. There was much beneath the surface; and once accustomed to his apparently habitual coldness, he would be found—if he *did* take a liking—a firm and determined friend.

It will not require much trouble of the reader, in the way of divination, to guess the attraction held forth in the family circle to Mr. Peregrine Bunce, who, with his innate cunning, felt how advantageous it might be for him, while playing his game negatively against poor Kitty Catheral, by absenting himself from his lodgings, to be working actively in the hope of ingratiating himself with the exceedingly pretty Maria Grayson, who stood, in all but blood, in the relation of daughter to his worthy friend.

And here let it be understood why the thought should have so conveniently struck him; and why, after having really made a very favourable impression upon Maria, whom he had met once or twice at parties and balls in the neighbourhood, he should till this juncture have abandoned all further pursuit of her. The reason was this:—he had always understood, and had perhaps formed an opinion of his own, upon his personal observations, that Stephen Nobbatop, the only son and heir of his father, was destined and intended to become the husband of his fair—or rather dark—cousin.

By a mere accident, a casual observation which he had heard dropped by some indifferent person, he discovered that young Mr. Nobbatop was actually engaged to another young lady, and that his marriage was to take place in less than a month. This

intelligence not only decided the course he should pursue, but the point upon which he would retire ; and accordingly, although the season was far advanced, he proceeded to the Swan at Ditton, which he proposed, at least for the present, should be his headquarters.

To this humble, yet snug hostelry, he brought his horses, and his servant—the break-up in London rendering it absolutely necessary for him to leave “no rack behind.” Better accommodation for his nags he could have nowhere found than in the ten-stall stable of the said Swan. Nor, if he had cared much about it, could he have done better than he might do there, in the way of living in a quiet way.

The associations past and present of that sweet vicinage are, to those who know the *locale*, delightful. There, embowered in peace and happiness, lies, sheltered and dormant, only till some new turn of affairs shall bring it into its full blaze of splendour, talent of the highest order. Look across to Hampton Court : what recollections fill the mind—recollections *re-collected* too, by one of its present worthy and talented inhabitants—think of the happy re-unions which so often take place within those ancient and time-honoured walls—breathe the purest air of its noble walks—remark, too, the sparkling eyes, the ruby lips, and rosy checks, by which they are adorned. Go to Molesey (all within a sort of magic circle of no great circumference)—find there located, learning, intellect, genius, accomplishment ; kindness unbounded, and hospitality unlimited ;—turn to the unassuming Sunbury, in more than one house of which the historian has been most happy—return by Hampton itself, with its proverbial sociality ; the place so justly favoured by a lamented Monarch, who generously and nobly proved, when on the throne, the sincerity of the friendship which he so cordially professed for its inhabitants while only a private individual.

It is a delightful suburban retreat, and the reminiscences of happy hours passed therabouts made Peregrine feel, not so deeply or sincerely, perhaps, as his historian, a charm and delight which it might seem invidious here to express in their highest degree.

In returning to this neighbourhood, as far as he is concerned, let it be understood, that if Hackney, Hammersmith, or Islington, had held in some of their mud-washed dens, Miss Maria Grayson, the calculating Peregrine would, with equal anxiety, avidity, and satisfaction, have taken up his abode at the Mermaid at the one, the Peacock at the other, or at the Pack-horse at the

third. All he wanted to achieve, was the "*premier pas*,"—and therefore, although very late in the season, he affected barbel-fishing, and, under the command of the best of all piscators in those parts, Mr. William Rogerson (worthy of commendation from Izaak Walton himself), he betook himself to the afore-named Swan at Ditton.

It is somewhat remarkable, or perhaps one might better say, strongly indicative of the selfishness of Peregrine's character, that he had not one single individual friend of his own age or standing in life, in whom he reposed a confidence, nor indeed with whom he even corresponded. Everything centred in self; so that when he fancied he was triumphing, there was nobody to whom he could impart his success, and when, as in the present instance, he found himself defeated, he had not an associate to sympathize with him in his misfortunes.

Izaak Walton, and all his authorities and disciples, pronounce and proclaim the sport of the angle to be pre-eminently soothing, and even exhilarating.

"O the gallant fisher's life,  
Is the best of any ;  
'Tis full of pleasure, free from strife.  
And 'tis beloved by many.  
Other joys  
Are but toys,  
Only this  
Lawful is,  
For our skill  
Breeds no ill,  
But, content and pleasure."

So sings Piscator to Coridon, in the words of Jo. Chalkhill.—Hear again the worthy Cotton :—

"The angler is free  
From the cares that Degreee  
Finds itself with so often tormented ;  
And although we should slay  
Each a hundred a day,  
"Tis a slaughter needs ne'er be repented.

"We care not who says,  
And intends to dispraise,  
That an angler to a fool is next neighbour :  
Let him prate—what care we,  
We're as honest as he,  
And let him take *that* for his labour."

This is gay, joyous, and for the most part a true picture of that amusement in which some exceedingly wise people find none. There is a calm repose, mingled with a constant interest in the sport, most soothing and most delightful to those who, worried by business, hurried by engagements, are doomed to the noise and bustle of great cities, and the senseless din of what is called society. The quietude of the beautiful stream—the freshness of the air—the fragrance of the flowers—the music of the birds—form a combination invaluable to him whose head is over-worked, and whose heart is not at ease. It yields a balm which those alone who have tasted it can appreciate.

“ Away then, away,  
We lose sport by delay,  
But first leave our sorrows behind us ;  
If Miss Fortune should come,  
We are all gone from home,  
And a-fishing she never can find us.”

However just this is, the reader must, by this time, know enough of Mr. Peregrine Bunce to be quite sure that his object in transporting himself to his present quarters was not exactly that which he professed it to be; nor indeed was November a season altogether calculated to realize all the bright visions of the enthusiastic angler.

As to the particular sport upon which—because he could ostensibly hit upon no other—he had fixed, there does exist a difference of opinion, and it seems but just and fair to set down what Sir John Hawkins has recorded of it.

Sir John says, “ Fishing for barbel is at best but a dull recreation—they are a sullen fish, and bite but slowly. The angler drops in his bait—the bullet at the bottom of the line fixes it to one spot of the river. Tired with waiting for a bite, he generally lays down his rod, and exercising the patience of a setting dog, waits till he sees the top of his rod move; then begins a struggle between him and the fish, which *he* calls his sport, and that being over, he lands his prize, fresh-baits his hook, and lays in for another.”

But dull as Sir John seems to make out this what *we do* call sport, the anecdote which he gives immediately after the above passage, exhibits the feelings of an inveterate angler in a somewhat striking point of view.

“ Living,” says he, “ some years ago in a village on the banks of the Thames, I was used in the summer months to be much on

the river.\* It chanced, that at Shepperton, where I had been for a few days, I frequently passed an elderly gentleman in his boat, who appeared to be fishing at different stations for barbel. After a few salutations had passed between us, and we had become a little acquainted, I took occasion to inquire what diversion he had met with.

“ ‘Sir,’ says he, ‘I have had but bad luck to-day, for I fish for barbel, which you know are not to be caught like gudgeons.’

“ ‘It is very true,’ answered I, ‘but what you want in tale I suppose you make up in weight.’

“ ‘Why, sir,’ says he, ‘that is just as it happens ; it is true I like the sport, and love to catch fish, but my great delight is *in going after them*. I tell you what, sir,’ continued he, ‘I am a man in years, and have used the sea all my life [he had been an India captain], but I mean to go no more. I have bought that house which you see there (pointing to it) for the sake of fishing. I get into this boat (which he was then mopping) on a Monday morning, and fish on till Saturday night, for barbel, as I told you, for that is my delight ; and this I have done for a month together, and in all that while have not had one bite.’ ”\*

Before we quit this subject, as regards either sport generally, or barbelism particularly, let us just look at the remarks of the Editor upon the attested Calendar sent by the *Catcher* to Mr. Bartholomew Lowe, in Drury Lane, Feb. 24, 1766, in which he distinctly registers the fact, that “from the year 1753 to the year 1764, being the result of ten years, one month, and five days’ angling, he had ‘given to the public,’ i. e. caught, forty-seven thousand one hundred and twenty fish.”

Whereupon the Editor—and we give it as a set-off to the patient endurance of the maritime barbel-fisher at Shepperton—says, “If I had the honour of an acquaintance with this keen and laborious sportsman, I might possibly at times have checked him in the ardour of his pursuit, by reminding him of that excellent maxim, ‘ne quid nimis,’ i. e. nothing too much. The pleasure of angling consists not so much in the number of fish we catch, as in the exercise of our art, the gratification of our hopes, and the reward of our skill and ingenuity. Were it possible for an angler to be sure of every cast of his fly, so that for six hours his hook should never come home without a fish on it, angling would be no more a recreation than the sawing of stone, or the pumping of water.”

\* Sir J. Hawkins on Walton, pp. 290, 291.—Ed. 1815.

This is perfectly true—the excitement depends upon the uncertainty. One word more as to barbel, and an end:—In the Quarterly Review, No. 133, under the head “*Angling*,” we are introduced to a certain Dame Juliana (a sister, as supposed, of Richard Lord Berners, of Essex), who became Prioress of Sopewell, in the year 1400, who spake thus of barbel, according to her commentator:—

“The barbylle is a sweete fysshe; but it is a quasy mete, and a perylous, for mann’ys body. For comynly, he givyth an introduxion to the febres; and yf he be eaten raw”—hear it not Comus—“he may be cause of mann’ys deeth, wyche hath oft be seen.”

Whereupon the said learned and accomplished reviewer, who knoweth well the angler’s art, as well indeed as he knoweth more things than many other men, says—

“That raw barbel *ought* to cause the death of any civilized unfeathered two-legged animal, all cooks will allow; that such an event should have been frequent, can only be accounted for by the delightful state of unsophisticated nature which prevailed in the fifteenth century.”

Here then leave we Mr. Peregrine Bunce’s *ostensible* piscatory pursuits. Knowing their particular object it may seem that too much time has been expended on the really scientific part of the affair. However, as it is not impossible that Mr. Peregrine himself may be obliged to answer certain questions at the house of his opulent friend Mr. Nobbatop, when he arrives there, touching his sport, perhaps no great harm has been done by the digression.

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#### CHAPTER XIV.

ON the next, or rather first, Sunday, after church, Mr. Peregrine Bunce begun his course of amatory proceedings; and, aware that there was generally a little re-union at luncheon at Mr. Nobbatop’s mansion, at that period of that day in each week, he proceeded on horseback, followed by his servant, to the gates, which he had but once before passed in his life, and that upon the occasion of inquiring after the ladies, whose carriage had met with some accident in returning from one of the parties at which he had had the pleasure of meeting them.

*Then, Mr. Nobbatop* had certainly given him an invitation to dinner, of which, for the reasons of which we are aware, and in the belief that Maria Grayson was the *fiancée* of Mr. Nobbatop, jun., he did not then think it worth while to avail himself. His almost immediate departure from the neighbourhood prevented any repetition of his call, or of his friend's bidding; however, the case being now altered, and Peregrine being, as usual, perfectly sure that his person, manners, and conversation, had made a favourable impression upon the young lady, he ventured to build his hopes upon this slight foundation, and endeavour to revive the acquaintance—for his own benefit.

To the servant's inquiry at the lodge, the answer was, that Mr. Nobbatop *was* at home; and accordingly our aspiring hero proceeded along the drive to the door of the mansion, which closed as he first advanced, but was opened at his nearer approach by some exceedingly smartly-liveried footman, who, upon his dismounting, conducted, or rather ushered, him to the dinner-room, in which, as he fully anticipated, the luncheon had been spread.

The announcement of his name, it must be confessed, fell as far short of his own expectations of effect as did our worthy Pepys' new periwig at church; inasmuch as Nobbatop himself, in the multiplicity of the avocations in which he was perpetually involved, had entirely forgotten all about him. Not so, however, the ladies—especially Miss Grayson, who not only had *not* forgotten him, but really remembered him with pleasure. They were delighted to see him—how long had he been in their neighbourhood?—where was he staying?—what would he take? and so on; all of which questions convinced the master of the house that Peregrine *was* somebody whom *he* ought not to have forgotten, and therefore three or four *luncheonizers* were “pushed,”—not from their stools, but huddled up into a crush, to make room for the new comer, who, finding how graciously he was received by the fairer part of the creation, poked himself between Mrs. Nobbatop and Miss Grayson, apologizing with his “wonted grace,” to a poor dear little girl, with plaited tails, who, in the concussion, was thrust out of the line of feeders, and forced to sit upon somebody's knee, to finish her repast with a raspberry puff.

The agreeableness of Mr. Peregrine Bunce's manner, the playfulness of his conversation, and the familiarity of his style, as regarded Mrs. Nobbatop and Miss Grayson, all conduced to convince Mr. Nobbatop that he had been guilty of some most

serious violation of good manners, in forgetting not only the person, but even the name of a gentleman with whom it was quite clear he ought to be remarkably intimate. Whereupon, he determined, that as soon as luncheon should break up, he would endeavour to make amends for his neglect, by inviting him to dinner, and cultivating an acquaintance which appeared so exceedingly agreeable to his wife, and (as he called Maria Grayson) his daughter.

Can there be a doubt as to the reply to the invitation? One of the vulgar errors which have obtained in society is, that a bishop, upon being elevated to his see, says, "Nolo episcopari," when the dignity is offered to him. No such thing occurs—no such hypocritical refusal forms part of any of the ceremonies connected with his consecration, his homage, or his enthronement—but so goes the cockneyism. But even if such were the fact, in the case of episcopacy, the example was not likely to be followed upon an occasion like the present by Peregrine, who, in declining the proffered dinner, might have, as he would himself have said, "thrown away a chance." Wherefore did he accept the said invitation, not a little elated at the manner in which he had been welcomed by Maria Grayson, and rather sanguine as to results.

"We can, of course, give you a bed," said Nobbatop—not at the moment able to recollect the name of his intimate friend.

"No, thank you," said Peregrine; "my head-quarters are not far off,—and——"

"But," said Mr. Nobbatop, "you had better sleep here—why not let your servant go back to your inn, bring your things to dress, and so stay with us to-morrow?"

"My horses are here," said Peregrine, "and——"

"Let them stay here," said Nobbatop; "there's plenty of room for them—they won't be worse fed, or taken care of, here, than at your inn; so just order your servant to direct them to be well housed—send back for your things, and make up your mind to be comfortable where you are—only being Sunday, I can't give you any fishing, and even if it were Monday, I doubt whether I could give you any very good sport."

Peregrine had fallen like a diamond into cotton—this was beyond his hopes—and after a certain number of protestations and expressions of gratitude, and of fears of inconvenience, and all that sort of thing, he submitted to Mr. Nobbatop's directions,

and, having summoned his servant, gave him his orders according to the suggestions of his excellent host.

While he was absent upon this mission, Mr. Nobbatop said to his wife,—

“Charlotte, dear! what is the gentleman’s name that we are so very intimate with?”

“Bunce,” said Mrs. Nobbatop: “don’t you recollect how agreeable he was at Lady Jane Ginger’s ball last year? and how very good-natured we found him after our accident at dear Mrs. Macsnigger’s party, when the carriage got swamped in the river?”

“Oh, ah!” said Nobbatop; “yes I do remember,”—not that he did in the slightest degree;—“then I have done right in asking him to stop?”

“Quite right,” said Maria; “for I think him a most agreeable person, and flatter myself that we are exceedingly lucky that his fishing propensities have brought him into our neighbourhood.”

Fishing propensities, indeed!

He must be a very silly person who does not very soon discover whether he is, or is not, likely to be what is absurdly called “popular,” with anybody upon whom he has fixed his eye or mind. Peregrine’s vanity upon the present occasion was not needed to assure him of the character of his reception by Maria Grayson. She really *had been* pleased with him, as many a girl might have been; and if he had not laboured under the misapprehension about her engagement to her cousin, he *then* might have achieved his great object, and been settled; for there was no doubt as to her uncle’s intentions as regarded her. She was called, upon the imaginary scale, to which we have before referred—a hundred thousand pounds fortune—but, reducing it to reality, her uncle really *did* mean, that whenever she married with his consent—and she was not likely to marry without it—she should have forty thousand pounds down—supernaculum.

Maria Grayson had, for two or three years, been the hunted of Hussars,—the persecuted of Lancers,—the apple of contention between small town dandies, young officials, and sons of country gentlemen further down the road, who admired her, as she justly deserved to be admired, but who (such is the gross unsentimentality of *La jeune Angleterre*) looked more to the worldly than spiritual feeling of love, and bowed before the beautiful picture, in hopes of its being sent home in a golden frame.

Maria Grayson was quite aware of all this—she was not to be

dazzled by an embroidered jacket, nor tickled with a pair of black mustachios—she had taste, sense, and feeling ; and it did so happen, that Peregrine—luckiest of his sex—had interested her more than any man she had yet seen—their acquaintance had been slight, their association brief. He had been deputed to take care of her at the party remembered by her mother, at Lady Jane Ginger's—he had led her to supper, he had made himself particularly agreeable, and had eventually handed her to the carriage—and it so happened, that then, labouring under the impression that she was engaged, he was not acting a part ; so that the natural playfulness of his conversation made, unconsciously to *him*, its effect, and as we have heard the bright-eyed girl herself confess, she was quite pleased to see him again under their roof.

To please his wife, his son, and his adopted daughter, was to please Mr. Nobbatop ; he had neither time nor inclination for discussions or arguments at home—home was to him, as far as it went, repose from worldly cares ; and, perfectly satisfied with the security that all went well *there* afforded him by the exemplary characters of the members of his family, he cared nothing for what happened, who were asked, who excluded, so as he saw smiles on the faces of those he loved, and a hearty welcome given to those who were beloved or beliked by them.

The junior Nobbatop was, upon the present occasion, absent—he was with his “ladie love,” progressing, as the Americans say, to a happy conclusion with *his* suit ; at which Peregrine did by no means lament, inasmuch as his experience in the scrutinizing qualities of brothers and cousins did not at all increase his desire for any association with such relations or connections during the process of heart-winning. Certainly, Peregrine never stood upon so firm a footing as this, since we have known him—a charming girl prepossessed in his favour—the master of the house most friendly, and his wife exceedingly kind—this was evidently his time to make play—of that he was aware, and accordingly directed his servant to bring a *large* portmanteau and two *sacs de nuit*, and to tell the Swan that he might probably not return for three or four days.

It may offend some readers to know, that Mr. Nobbatop's dinners—that is to say, meetings of friends at dinner—were regularly fixed for Sundays ; the true and just reason for that innovation, as some people call it, upon Christian—or rather Protestant—propriety—being, that upon no day excepting the day of rest, set apart for abstinence from labour, could the in-

defatigable Nobbatop find time or opportunity to exhibit his hospitality or welcome his acquaintance. Whether this notion was really and truly less pious, or less virtuous, than in the times when the squire uniformly entertained the parson of his parish at dinner on the Sunday; or whether all the Roman Catholics in the world are to be condemned for ever, for keeping Sunday as a holiday, after the holy part of the day is past, who shall say? but this we *will* say, that attempting to deprive the working classes of their air, their exercise, their amusements, and their one day's hot dinner in the week, by a rigid enforcement of puritanical regulations, which would have disgraced the Commonwealth, are at once indicative of hypocrisy, tyranny, and cruelty, and exhibit a spirit excited by a desire to drive those who are really inclined to religion, into a reckless disregard of all its just laws and ordinances. A poor man must not be shaved on a Sunday morning, to go to church; his wife must not send their dinner to be baked, because it is wrong for bakers to work, while, if she stays at home to cook it, she must abstain from divine service herself. In the afternoon, they must not indulge themselves with a cake and a glass of ale, after a healthful walk with their poor children. All public-houses are to be closed; all merriment is to be stopped; and the day set apart by the Divinity as the day of recreation is to be made a day of gloom and confinement for those who, as we have just said, have but that one day in the week in which they can enjoy air, exercise, the society of their families, and the harmless amusements to which, in far better days than these, the much better English people were universally accustomed.

Nobbatop was as pious and as charitable a man as his neighbours—he was universally esteemed—he righteously fulfilled all the social duties of life; but he did not see why he should not draw round him on the Sunday—his only day of leisure—his nearest and dearest friends; and enjoy, with proper gratitude, the good things of this world, which, under Providence, his own honest industry had earned; and so Nobbatop always had a snug party on the Sunday, never once omitting, throughout the year, a sirloin of beef as a standing dish—not exiled to the side-table, but placed down before himself; and it was his pride and delight to help it, with all the heartiness and kindness of a true English merchant, whose whole object seemed to be, to make everybody under his roof welcome and happy.

Peregrine's *début* at the dinner-table was exceedingly successful; he had quite sufficient *tact* to talk, when he could talk,

well ; and upon subjects which he understood, he made no inconsiderable figure. The moment the conversation turned upon anything which he did not happen in the slightest degree to comprehend, he became the most patient passive listener ; his countenance expressing the strongest possible anxiety to obtain information ; but then, he sometimes went beyond that, and having fished out a point which he thought he could manage, he would try back upon it, and ask a question, most pertinent in its character, founded upon the information he had just picked up, and which, while it proved to the original holder-forth the attention which he had paid to what had passed, and the aptitude of his mind, impressed him with an idea that, in point of fact, he knew a great deal more of the subject-matter under discussion than he had at first admitted.

Peregrine, upon this occasion, did his best ; and as there was no stickling for precedence in Nobbatop's house, he succeeded in getting himself placed between Mrs. Nobbatop and Maria, and really made himself exceedingly agreeable. If any fleeting recollections of Mrs. Mimminy, Miss Lucetta, and Kitty Cathedral, crossed his mind for a moment, he drowned them in the *mousse* champagne of his host, while he continued to keep the ladies "all alive," much to the mystification of Mr. Nobbatop, who, though he appeared to begin to recollect something about him, and was quite sure that he deserved to be where he was, because his wife and adopted daughter told him so—determined that, when they retired to rest, he would make some further inquiries of his lady into the history of his acquaintance with him, and, if possible, as to the place which he filled in society,—in fact, to cut the matter short, to find out, as people say, "*who* he was, and *what* he was."

It has been the fashion for some years past, for nobodies with fine houses to get somebodies to invite anybodies and everybodies to the nobodies' parties ; and even in the regular routine of society, without such extraordinary efforts to do something, there does not happen a ball in London, during the season, at which the master of the house is not just as little acquainted with a dozen or two, or the dancing men of the evening, as Nobbatop was with Peregrine Bunce. Peregrine, however, was located—his bed was ready—his dressing-room fire was lighted—his toilet spread—his clothes were laid out—his servant was in waiting, and he was in fact domiciled ; so that the inquiry, unless in the hurry of business his host happened to forget all about it, was not very important.

Mr. Nobbatop did not, however, forget ; and when in the sanctified seclusion of the marital chamber he and his lady talked over the events of the day past, and of the proposed arrangements of the day to come, Nobbatop received so favourable and satisfactory an account of our hero, and of his agreeable manners, various accomplishments, and rich uncle, that the worthy merchant, whose happiness, as we have already said, consisted in making those happy who were round him, suggested to his better-half an extension of the invitation to their new guest, and the expression to *him* of a hope that he would stay the week with them.

Mr. Nobbatop was off for the city long before his family or visitors made their appearance at the breakfast-table ; but certainly never were more honeyed words distilled into the ears of Mr. Peregrine Bunce, than those which, from the ruby lips of Maria Grayson, announced that her aunt was going to beg him to favour them with his company for a few days. Mrs. Nobbatop had imparted the fact to her niece, and the reader is left to decide upon the nature of Maria's feelings towards Peregrine, after being told that she was too much pleased to deprive her aunt of the opportunity of imparting the invitation to their guest, and to be the bearer of it herself.

There is in this world no happiness without alloy ; and although Peregrine found himself all at once received, invited, *séted*, and encouraged, not only by the heads of the house, but by the object of his ambition, his else unqualified delight was moderated down into something like regret, that he had not known the real state of the family circumstances, as regarded the supposed engagement between her and her cousin, when he was there before. Then, all the provoking intercourse with the Mintons would have been avoided—then, all the exposure with the widow Mimminy would never have taken place ; nor, calculating as he did, in the supposed case of his success with Maria Grayson some months before, would Miss Katherine Cathederal have been in England to bring herself and her calamities to his notice, until at all events it would have been too late to prevent the marriage.

To persons not in public life, and unaccustomed (as *they* are) to the constant exhibition of their names, as a matter of course, in every day's newspaper, the appearance in the columns of what are genteelly called the daily and weekly journals, of the patronymic of an ordinary steady-going individual, is something startling ; and however anxious a young author, or a

young anything, is to see himself in print, all the world—*save* and except the care-burdened classes, who are used to it—feel a nervousness and a sort of strange sensation at seeing themselves published by name in the columns of the Times, Post, Herald, or Chronicle, as the case may be—and this nervousness is observable even in the people who have themselves, by their own confidential servants, paid their seven shillings for the express purpose of being be-paragraphed and be-puffed.

When such is the case, the patient invariably reads the one paragraph about himself over and over again fifty times: the name Hobkirk, or Puddlefat, or whatever it is, in which he rejoices, looks larger than any other word in the column before his eyes; and he sits and gazes on it with a mingled delight and apprehension—delight at finding it there, qualified by a false punctuation, wrong spelling, or a mistaken distinction—and the apprehension that he may be laughed at for his self-exaltation.

Different is it, when, without the previous soothing process, some editorial remark brings the “private individual” before the public gaze—the restlessness—the anxiety of the unfortunate victim, who believes that everybody has read *that* which perhaps nobody has even seen; and that the eyes of a whole party are consequently turned upon him, while most probably he is personally unknown to the whole collection of lookers-on.

But far different were Peregrine Bunce’s apprehensions—To be noticed in the “Clit-chat,” or the “Fashionable Intelligence,” would not in the slightest degree have displeased *him*; and an announcement, that he had left the Ship Hotel at Brighton, for London, would probably have been thrice read and once pointed out to Miss Grayson, whose possible innocence of the fact, that all such reports must originate either with the fashionable removers themselves, their servants, or the waiters at the hotels where they put up, might have measured Peregrine’s importance by the notice taken of him in public papers.

None of this, however, was acting upon Peregrine—his dread was, not of seeing himself so announced, but of seeing himself, as Kitty Cathederal had threatened, advertised—with a “Whereas Mr. Peregrine Bunce,” at the head of the advertisement, setting forth in its body the cruel desertion of the said Catherine by the said Peregrine. Suppose such a thing to occur just at the moment when the bright sun shone, and the path was strewed with flowers. And then he began to consider, and ask himself, whether he had adopted a wise course in setting this unfortunate but now infuriated girl at defiance; and it would be very

difficult indeed adequately to represent or describe the state of his feelings, as the two or three daily papers, which made their appearance regularly on the breakfast-table (when no very particular accident interfered), per railroad, every morning.

Maria Grayson has been in some sort described to the reader—but not quite clearly enough; she was very quick, and clever—without the slightest pretension to a pedestal; but sharp in conversation, quite good enough in music not to be a bore, either as to the badness of her performance, or its excellence; she played and sang if she were asked, and sang nicely too—never attempting things unattainable by her powers. She drew, and well enough for all she wanted;—if her houses *were* a little out of the perpendicular, her clouds a little like apple-dumplings, and her trees a little like bishops' wigs of the olden time, elevated upon pitch-forks, she drew from nature. She knew nothing of geology, nor of any other ology, nor did she write *billets-doux* in Greek; but she was quite fit to fill her station in a drawing-room, and to take her part in conversation—ready to oblige—willing to dance with a little boy, if it were for the benefit of society, or to play the quadrilles in which her associates were to show off. In fact, for Peregrine, Maria was just the wife; and happy was it for him that she seemed to think that *he* was just the husband for *her*.

She was very handsome; and, as we have already said, had been much run after. She thought, however, that she knew more of the world than she really did know; and having chilled the aspiring dandies of the army because she looked upon them as fortune-hunters, turned towards Peregrine, not only because she preferred him personally, but because she was quite sure he was *not* mercenary—thus reminding one of the mouse in the fable, that fled in terror from the cock, which it saw strutting and crowing about the farmyard, to place its confidence in the sleek tabby Tom, by whose plain coat and apparently gentle manners the poor little innocent had been completely beguiled.

To get at as much of Peregrine's feelings as he chose to communicate, and at all events to appreciate his own view of his position, perhaps we may as well conclude this chapter with a letter, which he wrote on the Tuesday evening, in his first week's sojourn at Mr. Nobbatop's, to his uncle:—

“ *Stambury Park, —, Nov. —, 18—.*

“ **MY DEAR UNCLE,**—When I left you and London, I was so

very uncertain as to my next *pied à terre*, that I did not attempt to give you the power of writing to *me*, from my own ignorance as to the place to which you could address me.

“I am, as you will see by the date of this, most comfortably housed, for a week clear, in a very delightful family, who are kind and obliging beyond measure. I am sure you have heard me speak of them last year, as exceedingly agreeable people ; but it is only when one actually lives domesticated with friends, that a man can perfectly understand or duly appreciate them.

“My host is the head of the famous house of Nobbatop, Snaggs, and Widdlebury, and is one of the most amiable and at the same time sound-headed men I ever met with— indefatigable in business, of which he seems a complete master ; he leaves home by eight o’clock in the morning at the latest, and does not return till just dinner-time—his knowledge of mercantile matters is quite surprising ; and all I should fear would be, except that he allows himself relaxation on Sundays, that he would overwork his mind,—as I should say, break down.

“His wife is everything that a merchant’s wife of the highest grade should be—perfectly unaffected, and friendly, almost amounting to what one might call motherly as to her domestic arrangements ; she receives all her neighbours, who are too glad to be attentive to her, with an equality of civility and kindness, which might serve as a lesson for those who are, as regards society, much her superiors.

“Her son, who is at present absent, and about to be married, I remember liking exceedingly, but I always imagined him engaged to the divinity of this shrine—Miss Grayson—one of the most engaging girls I ever met with ; lively and playful, yet full of simplicity and diffidence, the best-natured creature that ever lived ; exceedingly handsome, with bright black eyes, and forty or fifty thousand pounds. She is the niece and adopted daughter of mine host, who has invited me to stay here throughout the week.

“The place is charming for a modern villa ; it might perhaps pretend to more : it has a portico, through which you enter a handsome hall, surrounded by a gallery leading to various bedrooms ; a saloon of some forty feet by thirty faces you ; on one side of the hall is an admirable dinner-room, and on the other a small drawing-room and library ; beyond the dining-room is the billiard-room, communicating with what I call the saloon, but which, in fact, is the general living room—the whole thing is done in the best possible style. His stables are good—his cellar

perfect ; and I do think, considering all things, I have been most fortunate in coming hither.

‘When goes he hence?’

says Lady Macbeth, speaking of Duncan—talking of myself, I could as easily answer the question as Duncan’s murderer. It strikes me that mine will prove an elastic invitation indeed, and that, as the marriage of young Nobbatop is so soon to take place, I *may* be retained here even till the celebration of that ceremony.

“If ever there were a girl calculated to make a man perfectly happy, I do think, from all I have seen of her during our very short association, I should say it was Maria Grayson. You cannot imagine anything more delightful than her manner—such frankness and good humour, such appreciation of anything said to her. I declare, my dear uncle, that the forty or fifty thousand pounds, which they say she has, has no more effect upon my feelings towards her, than so many grains of sand.

“Suffice it to say, that here I should be perfectly happy, if I were certain as to the measures proposed to be taken by that vixen, Kitty Catheral. At present, I am greatly obliged to her for having broken off a match between me and a driveller, which, in point of fact, the widow was—with all her absurdities about rams, turkeys, and pug-dogs ; and, as for the daughter, I defy any man, father-in-law or whatever he might be, to keep her out of the way of mischief ; she was born to it, and, mark my word, will (if she have not already done so) fulfil her destiny.

“I should like very much to hear from you, whether you are aware of any further proceedings of Miss Catheral ; but I scarcely know how to desire you to write to me here, because, if any accident or delay in the post, or your absence from town, should postpone your answer, so that it should arrive here after I was gone, it might give the Nobbatops an idea I had proposed myself as a fixture. Therefore, my dear uncle, if you have anything to say, and will be kind enough to say it, direct to me, ‘Post Office, Thames Ditton—to be left till called for.’ Any information will, I assure you, be thankfully received.

“If I can but get clear, even for a few weeks, of the Catheral affair, I am safe ; for here, my dearest uncle, all seems plain

sailing, and no doubts or difficulties.—This may sound vain, but in this case, I think, as the London riffs say, ‘there is *no* mistake.’

“ Believe me, my dear uncle,  
“ Your affectionate nephew,  
“ PEREGRINE BUNCE.”

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## CHAPTER XV

IT may readily be supposed that Uncle Noll was highly gratified with Peregrine’s representation of his then present position, and congratulated himself upon the vast improvement in his prospects, and the rapidity with which they had opened to his view. Like his nephew, he certainly did feel a little apprehensive that more would be heard of the irate and ungentle Kitty ; and with all his anxiety to prevent any unpleasant exposure, he did not clearly see how he could manage to do so. If he called at the lodgings which Peregrine had abdicated, to make any inquiries whether such a person had herself, or by proxy, applied there since his departure, it might rather whet the appetite of the landlord’s curiosity—or that of his wife—and moreover might, if the visit were repeated, induce the dissatisfied damscl to consider herself of more importance than she really was ; and still further, as the said landlord was aware of Uncle Noll’s place of residence in London, it might induce her to visit the Tavistock Hotel, accompanied by her attorney and his associates.

Peregrine himself was, as we know, exceedingly cunning and cautious, and, as he believed, had cut the connection with his lodgings so dexterously, that not a thread remained which could, by any possibility, serve as a clue to his present retreat ; but Peregrine had forgotten, that however anxious for secrecy and seclusion he himself might be, and however important they were to him while shirking his duty towards an unfortunate young woman, his servant Tim was not placed in a similar predicament ; on the contrary, having engaged the affections of the daughter of the ostler *en chef* at the livery-stables where his master’s horses stood, he had resolved, whenever the proper time arrived, to marry the said daughter ; so that hereafter, when the head ostler should have succeeded to

the then master, *he* might become head ostler, and when the master, being then his father-in-law, should "shuffle off this mortal coil," he should eventually succeed to the mastership.

And all this course was running smoothly. It was with the ostler's consent the courtship had been going on, and it was understood in the family, that whenever Tim should have cheated his master out of as much as his respectable future father-in-law thought sufficient for a start in life, he should marry the girl; the marriage being also dependent upon another contingency; that is to say, the succession of her father to the occupancy of the stables on his own account, which would, in a similar way with the previously described arrangement, depend upon his success in cheating *his* master to an extent sufficient to enable him to pay for his lease and good-will.

Under this honourable and satisfactory understanding between the parties, it was merely natural that Mr. Peregrine Bunce's servant Tim, and his sweetheart, should keep up a proper and constant correspondence. Peregrine never took the precaution of warning Tim not to say whether they were gone, for two reasons; first, because he did not in his slyness think it prudent to make a confidant of his servant; and, secondly, because he had no idea that he was likely to enter into a correspondence with any friend in London.

Unfortunately, however, for Peregrine, there *was* this correspondence progressing, as the Americans say, between the ostler's daughter and Tim, who, thanks to the march of intellect, which elevates the mind, and exalts the human character, was in the daily, or, as he would perhaps have called it, the "every-other-daily," habit of writing to his Dulcinea.

It so happened, that one of the most active inquirers after Peregrine, at his late lodgings, Mr. Hobsnob, Kitty Catheral's attorney, took it into his head to inquire of the landlord where Mr. Bunce kept his horses when he was in London. The landlord of the house told him as a matter of course. Hobsnob lost no time in ferreting out the fact; and seeing the dear Eloisa Jane Scruff, the betrothed of Tim, in the balcony of the stable-yard, enticed her down by saying that he had something of the greatest importance to Mr. Peregrine Bunce's interest to mention, but did not know where to find him.

The plump and jolly Eloisa Jane was caught in the snare. Unconscious would she have been under any circumstances, then, of the mischief which her communicativeness might cause;

and down she came, and gave Hobsnob the direction to the present residence of Peregrine, copied from Tim's last letter.

The little boy at the oilman's, who was sent down into the cellar to draw some beer, and stuck his candle into an open barrel of gunpowder, which he fancied rape-seed, while he performed the operation, was not more unconscious of the probable consequences of his proceeding, than was the unsuspecting girl at the livery stables of hers. And here it may not be out of place to record the presence of mind of that said oilman under the circumstances: the boy came up with the beer, having left the candle below.

"Where is the candle?" said the master.

"Dear me," said the boy, "I forgot the candle—I've left it sticking in the open barrel of rape-seed in the cellar."

The oilman knew what the barrel really contained;—he, his wife, and children, were seated at supper in a parlour immediately over the cellar—death and destruction to all of them must follow, if the slightest doubt or shaking of a hand in removing the candle caused a single spark to fall; conscious of his own incapacity to take it from its place without tremor—assured that one word of communication on the subject would scatter the family and endanger the existence of them all—he, with a power of mind calculated assuredly for greater things, said to the boy, "Well then, go and fetch it up."

The boy, wholly inapprehensive of consequences, did as he was bid, went down and took out the candle as steadily as he had put it into the barrel, and sure enough, as they say, *did* bring it up. Just consider the feelings of the father of that family during the minute or so which was consumed in the boy's return to the cellar—think what he must have endured, as he heard him trudge down the stairs, "whistling as he went for want of thought,"—he sat, as it were, paralyzed—he listened—he heard him coming up again—he saw him with the light in his hand safe before him. Then it was that he burst into a flood of tears, fell on his knees, and thanked Heaven for the deliverance of himself and family.

This anecdote, which is truth, may be liable to critical remark; and the historian may be sneered at, as the panegyrist of a sentimental pickle-man; but knowing the circumstances, and duly appreciating the instant resolution of the hero, he risks the chance of ridicule, to do justice to wisdom and fortitude where justice is due.

Miss Eloisa Jane's performance, however, turned out unfortu-

nately in a very different manner. The candle which she had unconsciously stuck—not exactly into a barrel of rape-seed—but the light which she had most unfortunately thrown upon Peregrine's retreat, produced, as the reader may already anticipate, a *blow-up*, which, if not so fatal in the way of life and limb as that which was threatened at the oil-shop, was fraught with results the least possibly pleasant to our worthy friend Mr. Peregrine Bunce.

It was about four days after Mr. Hobsnob had received the desired information, and about the fourth day of Peregrine's domestication at Slambury—so was the domicile of Mr. Nobbatop named—that as Peregrine, just waiting for luncheon, was sitting *vis-à-vis* to Miss Maria Grayson, with his hands extended, so that she might, in the most convenient and agreeable manner to herself, wind off from his fingers on to a sort of reel a skein of deep-green silk, intended, as she told him, “if he behaved well,” to form part of a purse which she graciously designed to make him, a servant came into the room, and hinted, in a gentle whisper, that a gentleman wished to speak to him, and that he—the servant—had shown the gentleman into the library.

“Me!” said Peregrine, somewhat agitated, and feeling himself get pale all at once—“Me!—are you sure?—it isn't my uncle—I expect nobody else—just say that I am engaged at the moment—and ask the gentleman to send in his name.”

The servant of course did as he was ordered, and Peregrine went on being wound from, but his hand was by no means steadied by the announcement, although, in all his surmises and calculations, it so happened that he did not hit upon the right subject of annoyance.

The man returned just as the reeling and winding were concluded, and told Peregrine that the gentleman said Mr. Bunce did not know him by name, but that he would not detain him ten minutes.

“Will you forgive me?” said Peregrine, gallantly, to Maria Grayson; “the worst of being much in society is, that a man can go nowhere without being hunted.”

“That,” said Maria, graciously, “is the inevitable result of popularity.”

To describe the feelings which operated upon our friend Peregrine during his passage to the library would indeed be exceedingly difficult. His thoughts flew about with a perilous quickness, and had not settled to any definite point, when, opening the door of the room, he saw, walking up and down with a measured step, a

sort of shabby-genteel, sickly-looking, smooth-faced, well-shorn person, unknown to him by sight, wearing a black coat and waistcoat, and sorrel-coloured shorts, with gaiters to match. His salutation of Peregrine was not all calculated to induce him to believe that he felt any particular respect for him; but as the visitor's hair grew lengthily behind, and hung over a very greasy collar, Peregrine hoped at the first blush, that he was a roving missionary, or perhaps a collector for some mistaken set of people, who club their money to do more mischief in their own time, than all the energies of their progeny will ever be able to repair.

However, Peregrine bowed very civilly—meaning by his manner to say, “What do you happen to want?”

“You, sir,” said the stranger, “are Mr. Bunce, I presume?”

“Exactly so,” said Peregrine.

“My business, sir,” said the stranger, “is not altogether agreeable; but I have no doubt we shall very shortly come to an understanding.”

“May I ask your name, sir?” said Peregrine.

“My name, sir, is Hobsnob,” answered the stranger.

“And the business?”

“Why, sir,” said Hobsnob—for Hobsnob it was—“is merely to ask your intentions with regard to the payment of certain bills for which a client of mine, Miss Catherine Catheral, remains up to this moment liable, but which, upon what is called an honourable understanding between you, you have agreed to pay.”

“Oh!” said Peregrine, drawing himself up, and feeling, on the first impulse of the moment, the organ of kickativeness very much excited;—“if *that* is your business, sir, you may go—my mind is made up.”

“Well, sir,” said Hobsnob, who moved no muscle of his cadaverous face, and who talked exactly as a methodist preacher, with what the children call the mulligrubs, would have doled out his words,—“other persons have made up *their* minds too. Miss Catheral is acting upon my advice, and, in fact, the business I have with you here, is to serve you personally—for she did not wish you to be annoyed—with a writ, a copy of which I have in my breeches-pocket.”

“A writ, sir!” said Peregrine, still doing brave;—“a writ for what, sir?—what am I to do with a writ, sir?”

“Anything you please, sir,” said Hobsnob; “I would much rather, for your sake, the matter should be compromised, although I dare say I need not tell you, it will be more to my advantage that it should go to trial.”

"Trial, sir!" said Peregrine; "what do you mean by talking to me of trial?—you know that I am not legally responsible—that I cannot be sued for these bills, and even if I could, and it comes to *that*, sir, I would go upon the immorality of the connection, and so drive you out of court,—as it is you haven't a leg to stand upon."

"You seem to know something of the law, sir," said the small attorney, "and probably you may be right—but we *will* try it; although, I assure you, my personal visit here has been occasioned, as I have told you before, by a desire to prevent exposure."

"Exposure!" said Peregrine, standing with his back to the chimney-piece; "who cares for exposure, sir?—don't imagine that anything like a threat will affect *me*—I think the application extremely improper, and your interference wholly uncalled for, and all I can say is —" (and here Peregrine stuck the poker into the fire)—"that I am not the man to be bullied or imposed upon."

"I did not come here," said the immoveable, plausible pettifogger, "to bully or impose upon you. I came to appeal to you, and to put it to you whether it would not be better to stay proceedings than have this affair reported in all the newspapers?"

Now Peregrine undoubtedly thought as the attorney professed to think; but he thought also, that by showing a bold front to the enemy, he might succeed in putting the affair at rest at once. The idea of the general publication of the case, well put in by the paltry practitioner, nevertheless had its effect.

"Well," said Peregrine, "supposing I *were* fool enough to listen to terms, what would be the amount?"

"I should say," answered Hobsnob, contracting his brows, compressing his lips, and casting his eyes upwards, as if such a fellow either expected to get anything from heaven or go thither himself,—"I should say somewhere about four hundred pounds would cover all."

"Four hundred what?" said Peregrine, giving the poker, just then rapidly reaching a red heat, another turn,—"why, I would see you and the —"

"Don't put yourself in a passion, sir," said the attorney; "I am only acting for another person, and I must conscientiously do my duty —."

"Conscientiously!" said Peregrine.

"And," continued the lawyer, "my hope was, that I might have been prevented the necessity of executing this service."

"Service, sir!" said Peregrine; "why, I will defend the case,

or rather the no case, to the last extremity, as I have told you ; you have admitted that I know the law, and moreover, I defy you, or any of your myrmidons, to produce one scrap of paper upon which I ever rendered myself liable for the unfortunate person by whom you are employed."

"I see, sir," said Hobsnob, "you are irritated ; and I think with you, perhaps, it may be as well for me to abstain from taking the step which I at first intended. It is quite clear, that with some minds, persuasion, and a mild and moderate appeal, have a more powerful effect than coercion. My client, Miss Katherine Catheral, is now at the Swan at Ditton, to which inn she accompanied me, and I think—as she tells me she *has* frequently seen the worthy lady of this house, when she was engaged as governess in a family near Guildford—it is possible that a personal appeal to your better feelings, aided by the countenance of the excellent Mrs. Nobbatop, may effect that object which, with a generally existing prejudice against legal proceedings, you at present utterly repel. As that is the case, sir, I will, upon my own responsibility, withhold the service, and Miss Catheral and myself will be here between eleven and twelve to-morrow."

A thunderbolt hurled by the hand of Jove himself could not have more effectually demolished Mr. Peregrine Bunce : pulling the poker out of the fire, he requested—for the first time—Mr. Hobsnob to sit down.

"Will you take any refreshment?" said Peregrine.

"No, sir, thank you," replied the attenuated attorney.

"It would be a pity," said Peregrine, "to bring you over here again to-morrow."

"Not the least trouble," said Hobsnob ; "visits of business always go into the bill of costs. It seems to be very fine air here. I don't care how often I attend you."

"But I do," thought Peregrine.

"And so," said he, "Miss Catheral is at Ditton. How did she know that I had been at Ditton?"

"I haven't the slightest idea, sir," said Hobsnob.

"It is very strange," said Peregrine.

"Very, sir," said Hobsnob,—"but with regard to business, what am I to say to my client?—will one o'clock to-morrow suit you better than twelve?"

"Why," said Peregrine, "I was thinking it would be best to save all that unnecessary trouble—you must know, Mr. Snob——"

"Hobsnob," said the mummy, bowing his head, and attempting a smile.

"Mr. Hobsnob—I beg pardon—you must know that in matters of this sort everything ought to be left to feeling. Heaven knows that I entertain but one sentiment towards poor dear Kitty—and the last thing I could endure upon earth would be to hear of her being worried or inconvenienced in her circumstances; but established as she is ——"

"Pardon me, sir," said Hobsnob; "that is a point to which I have not *yet* come;—ruined as she is by her last exposure at Brighton, the chances are that she never can regain her footing—certainly not amongst the class of persons with whom she has been hitherto engaged."

"Well, well," said Peregrine, who was exceedingly alarmed lest his companion should talk loud, or that the ladies might linger in the hall, into which one of the doors of the library opened,—“well, well, we won’t discuss *that*—all I can say is, that with *me* law is needless; the dictates of my own heart and feelings are what I invariably act upon; and I assure you, my dear sir,—and so I call you, perhaps, too familiarly, because you take an interest in Kitty,—that it was simply the idea that she had recourse to legal means to force me into doing what it was always my inclination and intention to do, that drove me to set up a defence, which, with your gentlemanly principles, you must be certain I never could have intended seriously to maintain."

"I assure you, sir," said Hobsnob, "I am exceedingly glad to hear this explanation; and I think our business may be brought into a nutshell."

"What!" said Peregrine, boiling with rage, indignation, and every other base passion that could agitate a cold, selfish heart,—“what *is* really the sum which will make the poor dear girl comfortable, and put her entirely at her ease?"

"Why," said the attorney, who saw how completely he had hooked his fish, "I stated just now what I thought would be the probable expenses if the case went to trial, but then I spoke professionally; you have most generously abandoned that style of conversation, and I put it to your liberality—Give me a cheque on her account for four hundred pounds, and I will pledge myself that you will never be troubled more on her account."

"If I would," said Peregrine, "I could not at this moment; but if you will trust me so far, I have no objection this instant to give you an I O U for the amount, which, the very day after I return to town, I will take up."

"That, sir," said Hobsnob, "is perfectly satisfactory; and, to show you how disinterestedly anxious I am in this affair, direct

the I O U to Miss Catheral—I mean, say at foot of it,—‘To Miss Katherine Catheral ;’ for, as you know little of *me*, without that caution, I might—not that I say I should—appropriate it to my own use—or it might be lost—or a thousand things might occur.” Hobsnob, of course, never meant that Kitty should see the “document,” for her doing which, as he represented *her*, and would shortly re-present the paper to Peregrine, there could not be the slightest necessity. The proposition, however, involved a show of integrity, which, as it cost him nothing, the worthy “gent.” thought it wise to make.

Never were three letters penned by man more painfully than the ominous vowels which preceded the numeral four hundred : however, it *was* done, and Mr. Hobsnob was bowed out ; took his departure, never, as Peregrine hoped, to return, and proceeded to Ditton, to inform Miss Catheral (that is to say, if she really were there) of the success of his mission.

Peregrine, enraptured at having got rid of him upon any terms, returned to the ladies, muttering to himself, with Macbeth—

“So, being gone, I am a man again !”

“Well, Mr. Bunce,” said Maria, as Peregrine re-entered the morning room, “your friend kept you an amazingly long time ; and mamma and I think we ought to make all sorts of apologies for not sending to you, to beg him to stay and have some luncheon.”

“Oh dear, no!” said Peregrine ; “it was one of my tradesmen, who was anxious to take my orders about something he has to do for me.”

“What?” said Mrs. Nobbatop, looking up from her work ; “are you going, as they say, to change your condition?”

“I wish I were,” said Peregrine ; “but I am one of the universally rejected of young ladies.”

“Fishing for compliments, Mr. Bunce,” said Maria, looking just as he must have wished her to look.

“Not I,” said Bunce. “If I went after such sport, I fancy my success wouldn’t be much better than with the barbel at Ditton.”

“I don’t mind your bad sport there,” said Maria ; “for perhaps, if you had been exceedingly fortunate with the barbel, we might not have been lucky enough to keep you here so long.”

Oh! if there be anybody capable of appreciating Peregrine’s

feelings, which we hope few people are, how readily will they understand the joy, the rapture, the almost shuddering delight, with which he heard these words. To hear a young and handsome creature, placed, as *she* was, in the midst of wealth and luxury, express her joy at his being associated with her; it was something even beyond his highest hopes—or, as the cockneys would write it, “aspirations;”—he bowed his head—looked his uttermost—and said—

“Miss Grayson, you will make me too vain.”

“No,” said Maria, “I want to make nobody vain. I have been brought up in the school of truth, and have no disguises; my aunt here knows my opinion of you, for I conceal nothing from her, and *she* knows that I like your society; and that being the case, I really do not see why I should affect not to like it; so then, liking it, is it but natural that we—for my aunt and I are perfectly *d'accord* upon this point—should be extremely glad to have you amongst us in our quiet family-party?”

“You see, Mr. Bunce,” said Mrs. Nobbatop, “my dear child, as I call and consider her, speaks plainly: it is the custom of our house—we affect nothing—we are content with the truth; and if my dear husband could but manage to divert his mind and attention a little more than he does from his numerous avocations in the city, I know you would like him better than you do, and it would be much better for himself.”

“Indeed,” said Peregrine, “however much I may agree with you as to the necessity of his relaxation from such intense business, no such process is necessary to increase the esteem, and, I might almost say, affection, which I at present feel for him.”

“You were born to be a courtier, Mr. Bunce,” said Maria; “you are the best ‘complimenter,’ if there be such a word in the dictionary, I ever met with. Your civil things are said so *à propos*, and come in so naturally, that one is almost inclined to fancy you sincere.”

“I hope, Miss Grayson,” said Peregrine, looking as if he were acting Joseph Surface in the School for Scandal, “that I am never *insincere*;—why should I be?—in this house it would be impossible, for I have every —”

“There, there!” interrupted Mrs. Nobbatop; “don’t take the trouble to answer Maria’s pertnesses; if I ever *did* tell secrets, I could let you know —”

“Aunt,” almost screamed Maria, “what *are* you going to say?”

“Something,” said Mrs. Nobbatop, “which you would not at all mind Mr. Bunce’s hearing.”

"What that is, I don't know," said Maria; "but—but—suppose we go to luncheon—we have been only waiting for *you*."

Bunce looked at Maria, saw her confusion and even blushes, and heard the tremulousness of her voice, when she proposed the adjournment. He was satisfied—"Veni, vidi, vici,"—the affair was settled. Short as had been his domestication at the hall, or house, or park, or whatever it was called, he had unquestionably carried his point, and *that* too with the evident sanction and approbation of the amiable Mrs. Nobbatop herself.

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## CHAPTER XVI.

THERE is certainly nothing in the world so unequivocally delightful as the self-satisfied feeling which a gentleman, "on promotion," enjoys when he becomes conscious that he has made his hit; and Peregrine was not flattering himself too much when he enjoyed this most agreeable conviction—he *had* made his hit. Maria Grayson was certainly one of the most unaffected girls that ever lived; with eloquent eyes, and a power of attractiveness which a man could no more describe than resist, but which, perhaps, anybody who has seen a half-languishing, half-laughing brunette, in whose countenance so much more was expressed than words, however ably written, could convey, may understand. The arched brow—the playful mouth—the one pet mole on the cheek—and the dimple which grew there, as if by magic, when she smiled—the affected frown, when she thought it right to repress the liveliness of her companion, and the assumed gravity if mamma caught something in the way of playfulness which she thought a little *too* playful, were all charming in their way. In his case, to speak truth, Peregrino *had* made his lodgment in the lady's heart.

In the days of Richardson, it became essential to such a reciprocity that the heart should not only be touched, but captured. In these our more modern times, when sentiment is as entirely excluded from ordinary society as hoops and swords (and, *par parenthèse*, sentimentality so decked out seems droll), it does not appear at all necessary that anything like desperation or desolation should follow as the natural consequences of a rejected suit, although it certainly does follow, that a pining miss,

or a desponding beau, would, in these days, be two objects of immeasurable ridicule in all the salons of the season, the thresholds of which, neither sympathy nor sensibility ever presumes to cross.

*N'importe*—here we have *our* two—*our pair*—Peregrine devoted, and Maria doomed; and no state of things could be more comfortable for both of them—for, as it seemed, they liked each other extremely, and those who happened to drop in during the week, would, and probably might, have justly said, they loved.

O Uncle Noll, Uncle Noll—here *was* a consummation by you so devoutly wished!—here were beauty, talent, fortune, accomplishments, all concentrated, gained, captivated, and captured, in less than a fortnight after the most signal defeat that a Lothario ever encountered. Here was no show of tender affection—no word of passion—it seemed as if, by a mutual understanding, Peregrine and the girl had got over all the cold and doubtful preliminaries, and that, without one syllable having been spoken, they understood each other, and that the affair had been settled after what the sweet poet calls

“The full-grown Adam,”

Fashion.—But that is the way in which nine marriages out of ten are brought about: it is the liking produced by social intercourse—or what I have elsewhere quoted from Miss Edgeworth, “juxtaposition,”—it is the habit. Peregrine could make himself extremely agreeable; but it should be observed (as it has been often observed, how lucky it is that everybody does not admire the same object) that what is extremely agreeable to one person or one set of people, is excessively disagreeable, and even disgusting, to another.

In one circle you will find a forward pretender to all things, howling out songs, serious and comic—dancing, and talking (with an affectation of ridiculing it) slang and vulgarity—considered the most charming and entertaining creature in all the world. Take him next door to the house in which he is so prized, and the chances are, the groom of the chambers will be ordered to show him the door in ten minutes. Go to another place, and there you will see a proser of the dullest order drawing out poetry, or talking fine—which, by the way, is the lowest of all vulgarities—who is gazed upon by the coterie as something exceedingly charming, who would not get admission

into the hall of the house in which the vivacious bore, just alluded to, is a leader. This is fortunate.

“These things are matters of opinion ;  
Some loves an apple—some an *inion*. ”

And if it were *not* so, society would be “confusion worse confounded ;” all the world would be running after one object—everybody would be ravenous for one dish ; and some one wine would be so universally drunk, that there would be a great and affecting drought upon the face of the earth.

Peregrine was never slow at availing himself of circumstances and contingencies likely to be available in his pursuits ; and he calculated with no slight degree of judgment and discrimination, that the now rapidly approaching marriage of Mr. George Nobbatop with Miss Screecher, of Caddington, would not only justify sundry apposite allusions to the happiness of the married state, but even, if he could get the business sufficiently forward, give a sort of opening for a suggestion, that if Maria Grayson really *did* feel, as he was confident she did, an affection for him, there might be that which in some families is considered an agreeable thing—a double marriage ; so that on the same day upon which Miss Screecher became Mrs. Nobbatop, Miss Grayson might become Mrs. Bunce.

This thought having entered and taken possession of his mind, Peregrine resolved to follow up the suggestion ; and although the season of the year was avowedly unfavourable to the evening walks and moonlight strolls during which amatory proceedings are best carried on—where, when words are wanting, and twilight hides the blushes of the consenting girl, the genuine feeling of the heart is practically confessed—still he thought, if he could contrive to catch her alone, and attract her thoughts to the point of her cousin’s marriage, that would be the moment to “pop,” as Uncle Noll had it. Else the playfulness and naturalness (as the cockneys say) of Maria Grayson’s manner were such that he utterly despaired of making her think him serious and in earnest. Besides, the period of their acquaintance had been so short.

Well, but then she was so ingenuous, so lively, so gay, so tender, so affectionate. If anything occurred in conversation which brought him or his pursuits or his prospects forward, what could he do?—make a dash at once—stand not upon the order of popping, but pop ; justify some sudden act of devotion

by the force of his passion, and the rapture of delight with which he was inflamed. No—it was too soon for *that*—and yet there was a captain of Lancers who went a good way ahead of him in his attentions during the morning, now and then ; but *he* was never asked to dinner ; and so poor Peregrine doubted—should he or should he not do something decisive and deciding ? No, he resolved to bide his time—remain another week if he were invited, ingratiate himself still more as a friend, and then suddenly throw off his disguise, like Sheridan's beef-eater, and all at once proclaim himself the lover.

Peregrine became, under the sheltering roof of Mr. Nobbatop, not only a special pet with the ladies of the house, but succeeded in giving several of the visitors, who partook of the daily dinners which graced his hospitable board, an exceedingly favourable opinion of his qualities. Wholly abstracted, as we have before said, in his mercantile pursuits, all that Nobbatop sought or required was, that his family should be happy, and that when he returned from the fatigues of business he should find an agreeable, but small—else would it not have been agreeable—party, assembled to partake of his excellent fare.

Amongst others of the occasional visitors at Slambury was a Mr. Towsey, to whom Peregrine particularly “cottoned.” He was a little man—youngish, but shaped rather like an oil-jar—with a round white face,—having, moreover, a sort of Grimaldi tuft of reddish sandy hair on the top of his head, and a feeble attempt at whiskers under a pair of very large ears. He was incalculably good-tempered, and by no means without ability,—and, moreover, an out-and-out sportsman,—came frequently to luncheon, fully equipped for what the French call *la chasse*, and was mightily affected towards Maria Grayson.

This it was that so much interested Peregrine—this was why he cultivated his acquaintance. He felt sure that he had nothing to fear from *him* ; and knew, moreover, that Maria's whole object in paying him certain little attentions when he was present, was to convert his credulous reception of her well-feigned civilities into ridicule as soon as he was gone, illustrated and finished up by an imitation of his mental and personal attractions, with which the said Miss Maria Grayson would occasionally favour the little family circle when he had taken his departure.

During the period of Peregrine's probation, nobody can question the nervousness by which he must have been regularly affected touching the very uncertain means he had taken to soothe Kitty Catheral and her friend. A woman angry, and

naturally angry, at the sneaking desertion of her betrayer, is not a being easily to be subdued ; but when she confides her wrongs and demands of right to a dirty attorney, the case becomes perilous. For three shillings and fourpence the needy vampire would sacrifice his dearest friend—and for six-and-eightpence, sell his own soul. Such a creature was this Hobsnob—an animal who, having persuaded the misguided girl to trust to him, had resolved, if he could threaten, bully, or alarm Peregrine into giving the I O U for four hundred pounds, to compromise with all the creditors with one hundred, give poor Kitty somewhere about twenty pounds for herself, pocket the rest, and perhaps affect genteel with his miserable family, and give a dance by way of a showing off of his great prosperity in his profession.

Peregrine certainly felt that he was displaying himself on the tight-rope, so long as Hobsnob had the power to come and topple him down from his altitude by his vulgar threats ; and never did a ringing at the bell at the gate of Nobbatop's villa announce an arrival without exciting a sort of fluttering sensation in the heart of the anxious and entirely disinterested lover, inasmuch as he feared it might be intimately connected with his somewhat unfortunate affair with Kitty Catheral.

There is a fable about the cry of wolf—a most apposite *sobriquet* for the “gent.” in question,—wherein we are taught that frequent false alarms engender indifference when the brute really arrives ; and, moreover, are there proverbs as to pitchers going often to wells, and not being broken ; still, as with Kitty—not Kitty Catheral, but Kitty of Coleraine—the event generally occurs at last.

One fine cold day, just as the party were ready for a start, to take a healthful walk after luncheon.—And here I must pause, to point out this course of proceeding as a practical mistake in the autumn, inasmuch as the walk or drive should be taken between breakfast and luncheon, while the air is fresh, and the sun bright ;—instead of which, luncheon lasting by the aid of conversation from half-past one till half-past two, the “lunchers” set out for their walks, rides or drives, just as the day is declining, and grope their way home through cutting winds or drizzling fogs in the dusk.

Where letters are to be answered, they may just as well be answered between the time of the return and the hour for dressing, as between breakfast and luncheon. This digression is intended to be advantageous to the health of numerous very

delightful persons, who, without having so simple a notion put into their minds, might never think about it. In London, of course, no lady can order her carriage for a morning drive until it is dusk ; but in London, people become the willing slaves of imperious fashion. In the country they may do as they like, although where the influence of what is called society is brought into operation even upon the invalids at watering-places, whose whole object one would presume to be health, the same observance of set rules is maintained. For instance : at Leamington nobody thinks in the winter of walking out of their houses till after their luncheon, somewhere about three o'clock. To be sure, many of them have been out to be drenched with the water which is so satisfactorily and splendidly served out to them in the morning ; but as it is convenient for them to stay at home until a certain hour, all the rest of the people who drink no water, and do not get up early, think it necessary to stive themselves up till nearly dusk, before they take exercise, merely because "nobody goes out to walk till that time." What extraordinary minds some people must have, to submit to the operation of a general rule, and regulate their proceedings under the dictum of a mob, for whose intellectual qualities, taking the herd individually, every one of their followers has the very meanest opinion !

O independence!—not only pecuniary independence—but independence of mind and conduct—what a blessing art thou ! To be forced or induced to do this or that, or not to do either, because what one likes to do happens not to be the fashion,—or what one does not like to do, is—seems a sort of slavery far worse than the fabled wretchedness of the negroes ;—to dine at eight, because it is the fashion, when one likes to dine at three ; to drive up and down Hyde Park in a dirty or frosty evening—for evening it is—when one might enjoy a change of scenery and air, by varying the excursion. To be buttoned up twice a week for four hours in a hot cupboard, hung with scarlet fustian, in an ill-smelling place in the Haymarket, called the Opera House, to hear the same songs sung by the same people,—to see the same capers cut by the same jumpers, and to look at the same faces which one sees every day everywhere else, seems one of the penalties paid, and at a high rate too, by the sufferers —to fashion, hardly to be accounted for.

It is not that anybody will deny the beauty of the music, the skilfulness of the dancers, the talents of the performers, or the gaiety of the scene ; nor do we go the whole length of the saying, that people who haunt the opera resemble men in the pillory,

and expose their heads while their ears are nailed. What to *us* makes the absurdity is the regularity of attendance—the absolute necessity which exists in certain circles, of going to the opera on the Saturday, as the same people, with a strange incongruity, reconcilable, we presume, to their own principles and consciences, feel for going to church on the Sunday. A new opera—a new ballet—a new singer—a new dancer—the attractions of these we can understand; but the monotonous repetition of the same exhibitions night after night, and week after week, makes the *ridicule*. As to the conventional uses of the opera, nobody can doubt their advantages to society; and those would be pleaded by any lady of quality who thought proper to defend the constancy of her visits.

Well, having made this preaching, we leave these cupboards and their curtains, and point the reader's attention to Mr. Peregrine Bunce, who was pacing up and down under the portico, waiting for the ladies, and who, while clapping his hands, partly in self-approbation of his success, and partly to make them warm, and who, just as he anticipated the friendly tap of summons from the fair hand of Maria Grayson, beheld approaching the house an exceedingly shabby gig, drawn by a wretched-looking horse, and containing as driver the chief object of his horror, Mr. Hobsnob, exerting all his energies to urge on the lanky brute behind which he sat.

The apparition was a dreadful one to Peregrine: what was to be done?—the vampire had caught sight of his victim—he would be in front of the steps in one minute. Peregrine cast his eyes into the hall, and at the top of the staircase saw Maria Grayson with her foot on the highest step, in the first position for running down, to which exertion she had been excited by the idea, that the sound of carriage-wheels announced visitors. It was impossible for Peregrine to know how the attorney might conduct himself, or what his first salutation might be;—it was quite clear that to his lengthened stay at Nobbatop's, and his consequent inability to take up the I O U, as he had promised to do, was to be attributed the visitation; but all his calculations were upset, and his philosophy overthrown, when Maria, having reached the door one instant before Hobsnob, turned round to him, and said—

“ La! what an odd-looking little man!—what can he want here?”

“ How do you do, Mr. Bunce ?” almost simultaneously with Miss Grayson's remark, said Mr. Hobsnob—fixing his eyes upon the unfortunate Peregrine's face with an expression which at

once conveyed the assurance, not only to the lover, but the lady, that he *had* some right to be there.

"How d'ye do?—how d'ye do?" said Peregrine, convinced that the only mode of proceeding was by the way of conciliation.

"I see," said Hobsnob, "you are just going out—I won't detain you five minutes, if you will get somebody to hold my horse."

This request—to use a colloquial phrase—"tickled the fancy" of the lively Maria amazingly—the necessity of standing at the head of a poor beast which seemed to have exhausted all its energies to drag the man up to the place where his gig stood, was more than she could comprehend. However, with her accustomed good-nature, she gave a hearty tug at the bell by the door's side, and forthwith the sound, like that of Roderick Dhu's horn, raised the vassals, and somebody was instantly ready to take charge of the "oss," as the attorney would have called it.

Hobsnob dismounted, and by his manner evidently implied that Peregrine could not go out upon his philandering expedition until he had favoured *him* with an audience. So Maria, although totally ignorant, even by suspicion, of the object of the vampire's visit, begged Peregrine not to mind *them*, and to ask his acquaintance to do her uncle and aunt the favour of staying to dine, adding, that of course there would be a bed at his service.—"To dine!—perchance to sleep!"—Peregrine "shuddered at the gross idea!" And after a consultation with himself, which lasted only a few moments, he resolved to let the ladies "walk on," and, having settled his matters with the harpy, he would follow them.

This was all very well; but when Mrs. Nobbatop came out, befurred and bemuffed for the walk, and saw a stranger, nothing could restrain her from offering the hospitality for which her husband was so remarkable, to any friend of Peregrine's. And there stood Peregrine in a perfect horror—certain that the needy creature would be too delighted to indulge his appetite upon the slightest provocation, at anybody's expense rather than his own; and certain, moreover, that the generous wine of his host after dinner, would, from his seldom being so gratified, get into his head, and make him perhaps vulgarly playful, and practically lively, or, in all probability, induce an explanation of the cause of his visit, and a detail of the whole affair of his unfortunate, deluded client, Miss Katherine Catheral, and her faithless swain.

However, circumstances do sometimes occur, even in the

worst positions, which are not to be anticipated. Hobsnob had hired his gig and horse—if he stayed, he would have had to pay for two days' usufruct; and although he might have put that into his bill, in addition to the thirteen shillings and four-pence which he meant to charge, and in addition to the one day's chaise-hire which he of course also charged, he had a wife—a regular hair-comber, as they say in the country whence he came—a fine creature, who was master as well as mistress of the house, and who, if her husband did not perform his daily engagements precisely as they had been "programmed," proceeded to inflict a vengeance upon the poor creature, of which he often bore the marks upon his lily (orange-lily) face. *He* dared not stay—and this *was* something to Bunce; and so the ladies did walk on; and a groom-boy did sham standing by the wretched skeleton which had dragged him from Ditton to the villa, while Peregrine led his unwelcome visitor into the library.

"Well, sir," said Hobsnob, "I presume you can account for my visit. Six days ago you gave me an I O U for four hundred pounds, with a promise that it should be taken up in *three* days. We have now waited a week, and—you will excuse me—we can wait no longer."

"But," said Peregrine, "don't you see, having prolonged my visit here, how could I go to town to redeem the pledge I gave?"

"I know nothing of visits, sir," said Hobsnob: "I never make visits, nor do I receive visitors. I know that you promised to do a certain thing by a certain time, which thing you have not done. Now, sir, that's the end of it."

"Well but ——"

"Ay, well but is extremely easy to say," replied the vampire;—"but *I* say that I must have the four hundred pounds. Here is what you call your honourable obligation—fulfil it."

"I will," said Peregrine, "I give you my honour, the moment I go to town."

"Go to town," said the attorney, "why what's to hinder your going to town? Five hours are all you want, there and back, and do the whole business in the interim—the railroad ——"

"Yes," said Peregrine, "but *that* ——"

"If you don't like the railroad, a pair of post-horses would do it exactly as well," said the attorney, "or better, because you can drive straight to your broker's, or banker's, and get the affair settled off hand. I have done everything for you. I have three

times stopped Miss Catheral from coming here. You really do not know, Mr. Bunce, what a valuable, and, as you will find in the end, what a disinterested friend I have been to you."

"Then," said Bunce, "let me clearly understand what your present particular and immediate object is."

"Merely to do that justice," said Hobsnob, "and see it done to others, which I hope may eventually be done to myself—in fact, sir, in four words, I want the money. The people of whom I have already spoken to you are incessantly annoying my client—and not wishing her, as I said before, to come down here ——"

"Ay, ay," said Peregrine, interrupting—"I see—but really and truly, the difficulty with me is, that without going to town I cannot manage the matter."

'So you have already said,' replied the scum. "Why then not go?—I have pointed out the facilities of conveyance; or, if you prefer it, I will avail myself of the kind invitation of the lady of the house,—dine here, and sleep, and drive you up in the morning. I have a clean shirt-front in my pocket-book, and not showing cuffs, I don't want dickies."

The latter part of the "gent's one" announcement, Peregrine could understand, having himself fallen into the economical system of the dirty-dandy school, of wearing clean "fronts," with "studs;" but the idea of harbouring Hobsnob for the day, of subjecting himself to the inflictions of his conversation—all the dread that had filled his mind when Mrs. Nobbatop had at first started the subject, came with redoubled force into his imagination.

"No," said Peregrine, "I tell you what I will do—I will be at your office on Thursday at two—I will bring the money, and redeem the *bon*—to this I pledge my honour."

"Why," said Hobsnob, shaking his head, and looking as he always did,—"honour, Mr. Bunce, is a certain something of which I have no very defined notion. I would, in all cases where I could get it, prefer bail—that's *my* view of the world; but, however, I suppose there would be no objection to a feed of corn for the horse, and a slight refreshment for myself. If you are serious—for this time—and remember it is the last time—I will agree to your terms."

"Oh!" said Peregrine, "as to the horse and yourself—why, of course, this is Liberty Hall—and you will be but too welcome." Saying which, and wishing him and his horse in a place to which horses are not generally supposed to go, he ordered some fresh lun-

cheon to be put down, and directed Frank, the groom-boy, to take the horse round to the stables, and give him a feed.

Now, having done this, and gotten a reprieve as to the money until the Thursday, Peregrine Bunce, as the reader may imagine, walked himself off after the ladies: not a bit of it—he dared not trust the vampire alone in the breakfast-room, where the luncheon was served. Not that, perhaps, Hobsnob would have stolen the forks or spoons, pocketed a salt-cellar, or carried off a mustard-pot; but he was quite enough aware of his man—if man such a creature could be called—to be assured that he would have made friends with the servant, or servants, who might have been in waiting upon him, to ferret out the truth, which, from the very little he had seen, he shrewdly (for these grubbers are exceedingly cunning in their low way) suspected it to be, as to the real position of Peregrine Bunce in the Nobbatop establishment. Therefore, with a much more sensitive regard for his own interests than for the portable plate of his munificent host, Peregrine resolved on giving his odious visitor no chance of being, as they say, left to himself.

The walk was of course abandoned—that did not so much signify—but as the vampire, who lived at home much as did the respectable and universally lamented Mr. Elwes, or the never-to-be-sufficiently regretted Mr. Dancer, of Harrow-weald, who, when the late Marquis of Abercorn sent him some turtle, warmed it for dinner by putting it between two pewter-plates in his bed, and lying upon it until it was hot enough to be eaten,—was most assiduous in his attentions to the *matériel* which had been placed before him: and as it began about the same time to snow slightly, the agonies of Peregrine lest the promenaders should return before he had finished his operations, coupled with a positive certainty that if it set in for snow in any serious degree his kind hostess would not permit his friend to turn out under any circumstances, kept him in a state of nervousness which nobody who has not felt something a little like it, can possibly understand.

Every huge bit of meat which the vampire threw in from the deep cavern of a vast Strasbourg pie, was watched by Peregrine with an anxiety wholly indescribable—that any *one* of the masses should have terminated his existence, would have been to Peregrine a much smaller calamity than the continuance of his persevering assiduity in successfully swallowing it. He walked to the window—looked at the snow—then, by way of being civil, and of cheering his own spirits, took a glass of wine with his un-

welcome companion. Deuce a bit did Hobsnob seem inclined to move.

"Nice place this," said he, helping himself to a bumper of Madeira, and just drawing away his chair from the table, as much as to express practically, "I can't eat any more."—"You are fortune's favourite, Mr. B."

"I am exceedingly happy," said Peregrine, "to be so well received here; and I rather thank you for your call to-day, for it reminds me that a man ought never to wear out a friend's hospitality."

"Ay, ay," said the vampire, warmed with the wine, "I guess how it is,—I have said so—mum—all will be right—only, for your own sake, don't fail Thursday—I assure you, my great interest is in *you*."

"Well, then," said Peregrine, "accept my thanks now."

"I declare to you," said Hobsnob, "as I am an honest man, nothing but my working would have saved you from exposure; as I say, Mr. Bunce, the true spirit of law is equity. I am, at one and the same time, for and against you.—Nothing like it, sir. I do all I can for Kitty—all I can for *you*;—and it is my way of working. Some low people, Mr. Bunce, may think I do it to get costs, and all that, on both sides; but such folks know but little of *me*, sir. There's a ruling power above; and in all I have done through life, I have laboured for the best."

Peregrine, seeing that the "gent. one" was getting *raather* forward in his course of imbibition, gently inquired whether he should order his gig round.

"To be sure," said Hobsnob, filling another glass of Madeira. "Order it round, or order it square—I'm all for fun—you do not know what a droll dog I am when I'm what Mrs. Hobsnob calls 'cocky.'—Ha! ha! ha!—Here, come, let us drink one glass together, eh?"

"Order Mr. Hobsnob's gig to the door," said Peregrine Bunee to a servant who answered the bell.

"Let us—I say, Mr. Bunce, let us drink one glass together," stammered out the attorney; "may we never meet, or part, worse friends than we are now, eh?"—And there were tears in the eyes of the hyena.

The present aspect of affairs was to Peregrine's mind almost worse than the past. The hypocritical humbug, elated by Nobbatop's good wine, now turned to be facetious, and became proportionately more disgusting to Peregrine, inasmuch as it was clear that one thing or the other must be false: the pious-

looking, demure character, which Hobsnob had hitherto affected, must have been an assumption ; or the lively hilarity and playfulness which he now exhibited, must be an imposition. However, as soon as the gig was announced, Peregrine, having pledged his honour to see him in the dirty hole which he called his chambers, hurried him out of the house, caring, perhaps, as little as any man ever did for the safety of another in a drunken drive, qualifying the indifference of his feelings upon two strong points—one, that such a nag never could run away with anybody, and the other, that such an attorney could, by no possibility, die of a broken neck—from a one-horse chaise.

The sight of the departing raff, before the return of the ladies, almost outweighed the perturbation which Peregrine had felt when he arrived, before their leaving the house. However, he found, that having pledged himself, he had but the one alternative left—he must go to town on the Thursday, and do that which he had been cajoled, persuaded, or threatened into, by his legal opponent—professing himself at the same time to be his friend ; and so Peregrine, having witnessed the entire evanishment of his Snarly-wow, made a fresh start, to endeavour to intercept the ladies on their return.

All people in country-houses have what may be called their peculiar haunts, and particular routes ; and so, by a little attention—and it was not a little attention that Peregrine paid to such details—he tracked and caught the pedestrian party on their return, and was repaid for his pleasing pain by finding Maria Grayson, his companion, as he walked down from Grimbledon-hill, which it was considered healthy to mount now and then ; the worry of the ascent being inconceivable to anybody but the medical man who recommended it as wholesome, which, coupled with the slippery descent, reduced the beautiful Maria precisely to the state in which the arm of a man for whom a young lady has at least a warm esteem, becomes a remarkably agreeable support.

The unbounded kindness of Mrs. Nobbatop was sadly outraged by Peregrine's account of Mr. Hobsnob's departure—why didn't he stay ? Mr. Nobbatop would have been so glad of his company ; and lawyers—for Peregrine had this time mentioned his friend's profession—were in general so very agreeable : the poor lady not knowing or comprehending, that there are not in creation two beings so completely opposite to each other in manners, character, or attributes, as the high-minded, gentlemanly practitioner, and the paltry pettifogger, of which class

Hobsnob was, perhaps, the most striking example. However, as he was gone, Peregrine cared little more than to express his friend's great regret at being obliged to return to town on business, and to insinuate, that his visit had been occasioned by the extraordinary anxiety of his uncle Oliver to see that a certain property which he possessed in Gloucestershire, in right of his mother, should be well looked after. And so Peregrine laughed, and joked—and so Maria was pleased—and so they all came back, to warm themselves round the fire before they parted to dress for dinner, the ladies falling into the wise and agreeable custom of taking a cup of tea in their dressing-rooms before they commenced that operation.

Nobbatop arrived, as usual, bringing with him not only his son, but a friend, an exceedingly melancholy gentleman, who spoke monosyllabically, but who was supposed to be one of the greatest capitalists in the country. He assented or dissented merely by "yeas" and "nays," and was to Maria an object, not of hatred, because she cared too little about him to hate him, but of ridicule; and her great difficulty, when he visited them, which he occasionally did, was to constrain her propensity for imitating his pertinent but uninteresting brevities. He was somehow intimately connected with the concerns of the firm, and was always treated *en grand Seigneur*, upon the occasion of his becoming an inmate of the villa.

The happy family circle, however, surrounded the hospitable board, Mr. Towsey being the only out-of-door visitor; and nothing could be more agreeable. Peregrine having perfectly recovered from the visitation of the vampire, and Nobbatop being more than usually eloquent upon the subjects of which he was really master, the conversation went about like a foot-ball; Mr. Saxby Mumps, the man of much money, but few words, sending it on by his monosyllabic kicks, with the greatest effect.

Never, perhaps, were exhibited, in juxtaposition, two persons, engaged in similar pursuits, more diametrically opposed to each other in manner or character than this very Mr. Saxby Mumps and Mr. Jeremiah Nobbatop. The warm, ardent, sanguine, speculative mind of Nobbatop, developing itself in glowing descriptions of the various great operations in which he was concerned, formed the most extraordinary, and, it must be admitted, agreeable contrast to the cold, brief, and melancholy observations of his friend, who never failed, let what might be the question, to throw in a gloomy doubt of its probable advantage or success.

Whether it was on the admitted principle, that people in this world are always pleased with those who are as unlike themselves in disposition and character as possible, or for any other more cogent reason, it is an undoubted fact, that whenever Nobbatop wanted advice—as it should seem—Mr. Saxby Mumps appeared at the villa, and, upon the present occasion, it seeming to Tows<sup>ay</sup> and Peregrine that the two Nobbatops and their guest wished to talk over something, of doubtless great importance to themselves, they betook themselves to the drawing-room.

And was not this the opportunity for “cornerizing” Maria? Was not this the proper moment for alluding to her cousin’s approaching marriage? Surely, if Towsey would but occupy the attention of Mrs. Nobbatop, this *would* be the time. If Towsey had been bribed, he could not have done better what Peregrine desired, for not only did he occupy the attention of the matron, but challenged her to a game of billiards, in the which “mace-wise,” she was a proficient.

Just imagine Peregrine, with the opportunity (if, as the country maids say, he could spell it, and put it together), once more in the first position for “popping”—not pointedly, personally, and particularly—but for putting into execution his projected scheme of making a sort of hypothetical affair of it, in its present stage, by referring to George Nobbatop’s approaching happiness with his affectionate Miss Screecher. Just imagine it—alone, by the side of his Maria on a sofa—the men engaged in their mercantile speculations in the dining-room, and his friend and the lady of the house at billiards, a game in which the noise of knocking the balls about gives evidence of its progress, and the consequent security from any immediate interruption by the players—imagine this, and doubt for a moment the course that Peregrine, not badly “champagned up” for the purpose, would pursue.

Peregrine certainly never had been so well received upon any of his predatory excursions as by Miss Grayson, for the best of all possible reasons, with which the reader is already acquainted—namely, that she really *did* like him; and so, while she was affecting to read, or do some nonsensical work, or something of the kind, our friend Perry “screwed his courage to the sticking-place,” and began:—

“What a happy creature,” said Peregrine, turning over the leaves of a book which lay amongst a heap of others on the table before him—“what a happy creature your cousin

George must be—so near the realization of all his hopes and wishes."

"Yes," said Maria, "I dare say he *is*,"—which she said in a tone which led Mr. Peregrine Bunce to think that Miss Grayson's admiration of the bride elect was not altogether unqualified.

"It must be," said Peregrine, "something more delightful than those who have never felt it can even imagine, to find one's affections reciprocated—and—to be conscious that one is loved."

"I dare say," said Maria Grayson, "it must be very agreeable," and she fidgetted about a little, as if she suspected, or rather expected, a more serious turn in the dialogue.

"How," said Peregrine,—"how is it possible that *he*, with all the advantages of your society—a constant association with you—and an intimate knowledge of all your charms and excellence—could have looked from home for a—."

"Ah!" said Maria, "there it is—there is a proverb which my uncle often uses, 'that a man is never a prophet in his own country.' So, I suppose all my perfections, which, as you say, are so very remarkable, were entirely lost upon George."

"Lost indeed," said Peregrine; "but perhaps, Miss Grayson, the fault is yours;—you, who seem to me to be omnipotent in conquest, may have repelled—repulsed him—and so —."

"No, no," said Maria; "to tell you the truth, we have been going on living and living more like brother and sister than cousins; and I don't think that a thought of any other kind of affection ever entered either of our heads; besides, I don't believe that George;—that is, I —"

And here Maria became a little confused—Peregrine saw his advantage.

"What do you *not* believe?" said Peregrine, placing himself in an attitude which indicated his desire to take her hand.

"Why," said Maria, "I do not exactly know what I do *not* believe. What I do believe is, that we had better go into the billiard-room, and see after my aunt's game. They will want somebody to mark for them."

And so down went the book, up jumped Maria Grayson, and away she ran, Peregrine after her, satisfied, as indeed under the circumstances he seemed justified in being, that he *was* settled at last; in fact, no man of the world could for a moment doubt the real state of the case. To be sure, when they *were* in the billiard-room, and Maria, with all the calm collectedness which ladies at all times, and under all trying circumstances, have at command, began to score the game, with an interest in the play,

so beautifully acted that anybody who did not know the truth, must have believed it genuine, Bunce riveted his eyes upon her with a look of the deepest and most intense interest. He beheld in that dear, unaffected, accomplished, yet unpretending girl, a store of happiness exceeding anything that ever, in his most sanguine days, he had expected to obtain. Maria saw his look. She understood—appreciated it—approved—reciprocated it—and that, too, just at the moment that Mr. Towsey was proclaimed the loser of a love game.

Any attempt to describe the state of Peregrine's sensations at the moment would be hopeless. All he could do to assure himself of the reality of the bright vision which had dazzled his sight, and filled his whole mind with rapture, was to try whether a second glance would be equally well received. However, rallying his energies, he crossed the room to the fire-place, over which the marking-tables were fixed, and before which the fair marker stood, and, affecting some doubt as to her honesty in scoring, contrived to touch her fair hand, which was neither angrily nor scornfully withdrawn. That settled it.

Only think for a moment how Peregrine at *that* moment felt. He was thrown into a reverie—a waking or rather wakeful dream. His eyes again rested on her—his heart beat—nay, even his limbs trembled. There could be no longer a doubt.

At that period entered the billiard-room Nobbatop, Saxby Mumps, and George, who, having discussed their dry business over sundry bottles, now felt it necessary to dissipate in the gayer circles of the establishment. Mr. Saxby Mumps, whose face looked like the moon in a mist, with a halo of white hair, complimented Mrs. Nobbatop upon her skill at billiards.

"Yes," said she, "I like playing billiards; not so much for the game itself, but as it induces exercise."

"Good," said Mumps.

"Don't *you* play?" said the lady, laying down the mace with the air of a shepherdess resigning her crook.

"No," said Mumps.

"What, do you dislike billiards?" said Maria.

"No," said Mumps.

"And yet," said Maria, "you don't play."

"No," said Mumps, gliding off to a corner of the room, to whisper some other monosyllables into Nobbatop's ear.

"Come, George," said Peregrine, "a game?"

"With all my heart," said George.

And so the ball was pointed, and the play began; but where were Peregrine's eyes?—What were the kisses and misses of the

game to the object of his idolatry. She marked—and probably re-marked the success of her last encouraging glance; not being at all aware of the appositeness of her observation touching Peregrine's peculiarities of performance, when she observed, "that he seldom made a losing hazard, but always played for the pocket."

Had Dumbledore been there, he would have made some horrid joke; and if Uncle Noll had been of the party, he would have sported something worse, inasmuch as it would have been a truism relative to his hopeful nephew's speculative pursuits, which, it must be owned, now appeared to be drawing to an exceedingly happy conclusion.

"My love," said Mr. Nobbatop, as the evening wore on, or rather wore out—"Mr. Mumps, George, and myself, must start before breakfast in the morning."

"What!" said Mrs. Nobbatop, "nothing on your stomach?—Oh, no—why—"

"I don't mean *that*, dear," said the great capitalist; "I mean before *your* breakfast time;—it is of the very greatest importance that we should get our letters at the earliest possible moment to-morrow."

"Well, but surely," said Mrs. Nobbatop, "you will breakfast before you go—what matters the hour?"

"My love," said the fond husband, "manage that as you please. Give Mrs. Ferrett her orders;—all I mean to say is, that we must be away from this by seven."

"Seven, love!" exclaimed the lady, with a look of horror; "why it's dark at seven."

"We," said Nobbatop, "who are men of business and of circumstances, care little about day or night; we must be off;—what say you, Mr. Mumps?"

"Poz!" said Mr. Mumps.

"Of course," said the lady of the house, "it is my duty to obey—so I will take care that everything shall be ready in time."

"Or," said George playfully, "what do you think, my dear mother, if we made a night of it, and sat up till the time came?"

"No," said Mumps, shaking his head, in order to save himself the trouble of repeating the monosyllabic negative.

"Oh, all shall be ready," said the dear kind hostess; "only I could not think of letting Mr. N. go out in the morning, this weather, without something on his stomach, for the world."

Peregrine, who had been making his play rather effectively with Maria at the end of the billiard-table, teaching her to spin

the ball with her fingers, and other manœuvres connected with the game, had ears sufficiently long to catch enough of the conversation which was passing in the divan, to ascertain that he,—“forced by duty” (although “racked by love”), to go to town himself in the morning, had no chance of a place in Nobbatop’s carriage. As a set-off to this defeat, he would, however, have the opportunity of further ingratiating himself, during the regular breakfast and the two or three following hours, then riding over to Ditton, and thence posting to town; or perhaps, if he found it not unpleasant, taking the whole distance on horseback. However, he thought it right to intimate the necessity of his departure, and—at least, his temporary—absence for a couple of days.

“I am sorry,” said Peregrine, advancing to the main body of the party, Maria having thought it right to abandon her teacher, whose anxiety for her advancement in the “noble game,” she fancied might attract more notice than was quite desirable—“that I must also leave you to-morrow, Mrs. Nobbatop—it is, I admit, to me a very painful separation, but——”

“Why,” said the benevolent lady, “where are *you* going?—what can you have to do?—you are not like my husband and son, tied, as I say, to their desks.”

“No,” said Peregrine, “but I mentioned to you yesterday the anxiety of my kind uncle to secure my right to a little property which I have in Gloucestershire, and I feel it a duty to so kind a relation—indeed, the nearest relation I have in the world—not to seem to neglect his wishes, even though the object, as far as I am myself concerned, may not be of any very great importance.”

“But,” said Mrs. Nobbatop, “you will come back to us?”

“You are too kind,” said Peregrine, bowing; “*I* shall be too happy.”

“Well then,” said Maria, who returned from her hunt after nothing in the adjoining room, “you will be our only cavalier at breakfast.—You, Mr. Towsey——?”

“Oh! I,” said Towsey, “am off directly. I have ordered my carriage at ten, and must not hope to see you to-morrow.”

In fact, Mr. Towsey, who was a most patient lover, had seen quite enough that evening to satisfy himself of the perfect inefficacy of any future efforts of *his* towards gaining the heart of Miss Grayson, and had resolved, if ever he did again visit the villa, for the sake of the exceedingly agreeable society, and the remarkably good dinners, he would never attempt any

further progress in his siege of the heart of the wealthy Nobbatop's adopted daughter.

Time wore on—flew, as Peregrine thought—the supper, never missed at Nobbatop's, was announced—eaten or looked at—the *life-refreshing* liquors were imbibed—adieux were reciprocated—candles were lighted—the ladies evanished—the men just took *one* glass more, which, although it might be low and vulgar, was the way of the house. Mumps sipped, and said nothing. Nobbatop drank little, but talked much—was eloquent upon bonds, and loans, and other matters, of which Peregrine was not in the slightest degree cognizant; nor if he *had* been, could he have commanded his thoughts to such subjects, while his whole heart and mind were concentrated in Maria. So, when the clock struck twelve, the party separated; and Peregrine, having promised to return on the second day after his departure from Slisbury, the various members of the family retired to rest.

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## CHAPTER XVII.

PEREGRINE was not a genuine, true-hearted, generous person, as we too well know. The success he had evidently met with in his career with Maria, would, in a high-minded, ardent, and ingenuous lover, have kept him awake during the night which followed, what we may really call, the unequivocal admission of her feelings towards him. He would have tossed and tumbled in his bed, restless and sleepless, and anxious for the coming day, to renew that happy interchange of affection which had so cheered and charmed him when they parted; and would, with all the ardour of a sanguine mind, have pictured in his waking thoughts that which, had he slept, would have influenced his dreams—the happiness in store for him when she should be really his. A thousand various schemes of domestic happiness would have presented themselves to his imagination; and he would have risen with the lark to seek his loved one at the earliest moment at which she was stirring.

No—these sweet genuine feelings of devotion, anxious beyond all other objects for the security, the comfort, the heart-welcome of the dear, tender, affectionate being who had smiled upon him, nay, who had virtually accepted him, disturbed not the

repose of Mr. Peregrine Bunce. He rolled himself up in the cold sheets, which his crawling blood had not power to warm, and began to inquire, and calculate, and consider, how the forty-thousand pounds Maria was to have were invested. The consent of Nobbatop he did not fear to gain ; but then, might not he, as the fortune was to come from himself, impose some conditions ? Oh that word !—The lover who talks of conditions—who hesitates—who pauses—who calculates ! But why write a word upon the subject ?—We all know Mr. Peregrine Bunce pretty well by this time.

Correct as clockwork, Mr. Nobbatop senior, Mr. Nobbatop junior, and Mr. Saxby Mumps, congregated round the candle-lighted breakfast-table in the morning, and quitted Slambury, as ordered and ordained, by seven o'clock ; the great object being to receive the earliest intelligence of something that was going to happen somewhere in Europe, Asia, Africa, or America, but in which, excepting themselves and some other set of people, who were trying, as the sailors say, to "get to windward of them," nobody upon the face of the earth—at least British earth—was in the slightest degree either concerned or interested.

After a more than usually careful toilet, Mr. Peregrine Bunce proceeded towards the breakfast-room, having told his valet-groom to have his horses ready at eleven, dreading, as he did, another warning from Hobsnob, and sincerely wishing him in advance in that place to which, both in right of his professional pursuits and private character, he was eventually doomed and destined.

Maria's morning manner was in just accordance with her previous evening kindness—proportionably less ardent, inasmuch as morning is not, as Moore says, the genial hour for burning ; but it was all that Peregrine could wish, and infinitely more than he could have hoped. The bright eyes that the night before had sparkled with pleasure, while she listened to his conversation, now rested with a mild and gentle radiance on his countenance, and the thrice-repeated inquiry, whether he really *must* go, was made with a quiet, but evidently unaffected earnestness, which seemed only mitigated by the equally earnest declaration of his resolution to return "the day after to-morrow."

Mrs. Nobbatop, who could not bear what is called a break-up of a snug little party, suggested fifty plans for getting all the business he had to do in town transacted for him. He would be so missed—and dear Mr. Nobbatop, whose mind was all day

harassed by important occupations, was so delighted with his society, and so on—little suspecting the nature of the affair to which Mr. Peregrine Bunce's attention had been so peremptorily attracted.

This kind lady's persuasions and entreaties, however, were vain ; and after luncheon (for, in spite of all remonstrances, they would not permit him to start before), Peregrine took his departure from Slambury, receiving, in return for the cordial shake of her hand, a reciprocal pressure from that of Maria, which thrilled through his heart, beating as it did at the moment with indescribable delight at having secured forty or fifty thousand pounds, with the enjoyment, probably for many years to come, of such an establishment as that which, *malgré lui*, he was compelled temporarily to quit, but to which he meant, having disposed of his little difficulties *in re* Catheral, to return as speedily as possible.

One condition, however, was positively insisted upon : namely, that he *must* be the bearer of an invitation to his uncle. Maria seemed extremely earnest in pressing this, and gave at least a dozen reasons why Mr. Oliver Bunce would be so happy and comfortable at Slambury, and the pleasure her uncle would feel in his society. Mrs. Nobbatop seconded all these solicitations and suggestions, because she saw Maria's anxiety on the point ; an anxiety which arose out of the natural solicitude to become acquainted with so important a branch of a family, with which it seems she had almost made up her mind to become shortly connected.

It was impossible for Peregrine to do anything but express his gratitude for their attentions, and, of course, promise to convey their kind welcome to the old gentleman ; hinting, however, that he did not think he would venture upon a new engagement, as the year was closing, and he made a point to be at his own home at Christmas. In fact, Peregrine was not at all anxious that Noll should come to Slambury until he had made his "*assurance* doubly sure," and perfectly secured his prize ; for up to the present moment, nothing had been said to prevent Maria's rejection of him, if unfortunately she, or her uncle, or her aunt, or her cousin, should take a dislike to Noll. To such a man as Dumbledore, Peregrine had been perfectly safe in introducing him ; but even *there* he kept him upon thorns as long as the short visit lasted. Here the matter was totally different, and the subject required consideration ; so he contented himself by promising to use all his eloquence to in-

duce his worthy relative to accept their kind invitation ; and so professing, he made preparations for his departure.

And then, to see how Mrs. Nobbatop took care of him—how she would insist upon his having an extra handkerchief round his throat, and muffatees on his wrists, and entreating him to be sure, if he should get wet on his journey, to change his clothes immediately on his arrival at home.

Poor Mrs. Nobbatop ! Home, Peregrine had none—nor was it until he had ridden some six or seven miles that it struck him that, as all the mischief of the discovery of his residence in town by Kitty had been done, and as he had been driven into making up his mind to settle that affair, he might as well go straight back to his old lodgings, whither his worthy man Tim could, with the greatest facility, re-transport his master's trunks, and where, supposing his rooms were not let, he might locate himself until he became a Benedick.

Accordingly, when he made a brief halt at Richmond, to give his favourite bay a few minutes' rest (having resolved upon riding to town), he imparted to Tim his intention of going straight back to the "place whence he came," which announcement seemed to Tim somewhat needless, inasmuch as *he* was not aware of any reason why a gentleman leaving his lodgings for a country excursion, should *not* return to them. This did not at the moment strike Peregrine, whose whole mind was occupied in the concoction of sinister designs, and the contrivance of underhand manœuvres ; and who thought that Tim, with all his readiness of comprehension and inquisitiveness of disposition, was, in fact, in full possession of the real cause of his sudden abdication.

This not being the case, the return to the lodgings was duly effected. They were still vacant, and the landlord and landlady quite glad to see Peregrine back again. Tim was despatched to put up the horses in the place where his heart was already installed, and if he was not quite so soon back from the errand, the reader will recollect that his Dulcinea dwelt over the stables, and that his affection for her might be well pleaded as an excuse for any little delay.

Peregrine cared nothing for the tardiness of his return. He had given him orders to get back the trunks which he so short a time before had directed him to remove, and, in fact, to replace him in his old apartments : all which operations could be performed while he himself went to fulfil his engagement with Mr. Hobsnob—an engagement which, in every sense of the word,

was most disagreeable to him ; and not the less so, because, upon calculating and “totting up,” it did not clearly appear to him that he had anything in the way of ready cash amounting to a sufficient sum to meet the I O U which he had given.

He knew not the individual character of Mr. Hobsnob, but he knew the generic merits of his class of practitioners too well to doubt for a moment that he would do anything and everything to annoy him on the part of Miss Catheral (who, in all probability, had attracted his particular attention, for particular reasons, although, as has been already said, the creature had a wife and family of his own), or leave, just at this critical juncture, a chance of an exposure which might overthrow all his brightest expectations ; or, knowing what we do of Miss Grayson’s real feelings, *we may say*, splendid certainties.

Therefore did Peregrine Bunce repair to his banker’s book—find himself below the mark, in the way of balance ; but, with his prospects, the securities he possessed, and all the rest of it, no difficulty could possibly occur on account of so small a sum, and Peregrine proceeded to the dirty den of the extortioner with four nice new one hundred pound notes, looking by far too clean and delicate to be pawed by such hands as Hobsnob’s.

In his way from his banker’s to the harpy, he thought it right, and prudent, and proper, to favour his uncle with a call at the Tavistock Hotel,—the large, wild, rambling house or houses, where Noll, in company with hundreds of other worthy and respectable people, had been, as we already know, for several years domesticated when in town.

As a proof of the vastitude of the affairs connected with London society, in its different classes and degrees, and of the possibility of utter seclusion in the midst of all its various pursuits, it is a fact on record, that one inhabitant of that popular and (to a great extent) convenient hotel, lived in it for several years unknown by any other designation than that of the number of the room which he occupied ; and that in another instance of a similar nature, but where the inmate had not been so long domiciled there, a gentleman having destroyed himself in a fit of insanity, the chambermaid, to whom the care of his apartment was confided, rushed into the bar with a countenance full of horror, and exclaimed to the landlord, “What do you think, sir ?—No. 37 has shot himself !”

At this hotel Peregrine Bunce called—his uncle was from home ; Peregrine left word that he would call again, and proceeded to the miserable chambers, as Hobsnob called a dirty hole

on a third floor of the dirtiest inn—nominally of court—in London. *He* was not from home—not he—he sat like a spider—(with many companions about the apartment) spinning his six-and-eightpenny meshes; and the only thing that ever cheered up his deathlike countenance was a rap at the door, which announced the approach of a victim, just as a regular aranea twiddles and twitches his feelers when a stray fly merely hits upon a filament of his dirt-constructed web.

As a striking evidence of the total change of manners, and the relative positions and conditions of men, during the last two hundred years, the following account of what an attorney in *his* day was, from the pen of the right reverend and right learned author of “Microcosmography,” may not be uninteresting, although, it is probable, well enough known:—

“An attorney’s ancient beginning,” says the Bishop, “was a blue coat;—since a livery, and his hatching under a lawyer; whence, though but pen-feathered, he hath now nested for himself, and with his hoarded pence purchased an office. Two desks, and a quire of paper, set him up, where he now sits in state for all comers. We can call him no author, yet he writes very much, and with the infamy of the court is maintained in his libels. He has some smatch of a scholar, and yet uses Latin very hardly; and lest it should accuse him, cuts it off in the midst, and will not let it speak out. He is, contrary to great men, maintained by his followers, that is, his poor country clients that worship him more than their landlord, and, be they never such clurfs, he looks for their courtesy. He first racks them soundly himself, and then delivers them to the lawyer for execution. His looks are very solicitous, importing much haste and despatch; he is never without his hands full of business, that is, of paper. His skin becomes at last as dry as his parchment, and his face as intricate as the most winding cause. He talks statutes as fiercely as if he had mooted seven years in the inns of court; where all his skill is stuck in his girdle, or in his office window. Strife and wrangling have made him rich, and he is thankful to his benefactors, and nourishes it. If he live in a country village, he makes all his neighbours good subjects; for there shall be nothing done but what there is law for. His business gives him not leave to think of his conscience; and when the time or term of his life is going out for Doomsday, he is secure, for he hopes he has a trick to reverse judgment.”

The Bishop’s lively description, taken with a just and proper allowance for the difference of manners and habits, is curious.

However, Peregrine was not prejudiced in his intercourse with Hobsnob by any such "foregone conclusions," but, instinctively and inherently mean and shuffling as he was himself, he almost shuddered as he gave a rat-tat with the little brass knocker on the inner door of the vampire's rooms, who, expecting a dupe, did not on that day sport oak.

The dialogue between Peregrine and the harpy was short and not sweet. The look of the lawyer—the tone of his voice—the hypocritical seriousness of a creature who was a regular wag and a practical joker amongst his fellows in society—the interest which he affected to take in Katherine—the smell of the place in which he lived—the chilly damp of it—the whole combination of circumstances—hurried Peregrine to the conclusion of the interview, at which it arrived when he handed over to the vampire the four hundred pounds, as promised, and received a receipt in full of all demands from him on the part of his client, Miss Katherine Catheral, together with the I O U, which, of course, she had never seen.

"Would you," said Hobsnob, "like to see her?—after so intimate an acquaintance, perhaps some feeling of regard may remain."

"No," said Peregrine, "certainly not. I do not consider that I have been fairly treated in this business. To be sure, our meeting at Brighton was wholly unexpected, and, as it turned out, disastrous; but no, tell her that I shall always wish her well, in spite of what I think has been her misconduct; and so, sir, I wish you a good morning."

Hobsnob rose from a dirty black leathern chair, through the much worn seat of which a tuft of grizzly horsehair protruded, and rang a bell which was cracked, and upon which the twisted and rusty wire refused to act; wherefore it did not awaken a wretched scrub, son of a neighbouring shoe-black, who earned two shillings a week from Hobsnob for sitting on a high stool in the outer room of the two, and acting clerk upon any day whenever anybody was expected to call upon business. Hobsnob, however, ushered Peregrine out; having done which he gave the boy a waking kick, and then retired to his own den, where, looking over his arrangement of the affairs of Miss Catheral, he came to the conclusion, that having compromised with her creditors for about seven shillings in the pound, one hundred pounds would settle *them*, while by handing her over another hundred (short his bill, which amounted to forty-eight, ten, and six), he should behave nobly, and pocket the other two hundred, beyond what

he considered his legitimate costs, as a just and proper remuneration for having relieved his fair client from all further responsibility, and displayed sufficient generosity on the part of Peregrine to secure him from any further applications from "the damsel all forlorn," this being even a better bargain for her than we had anticipated.

If the attorney felt delighted with his skill, and its success, Peregrine, as he paced the streets towards Covent Garden, to revisit his uncle's domicile, was equally satisfied; he had settled *that* affair—he was safe. Maria Grayson was his own, and, after all, what *were* four hundred pounds in such a case, when everything was taken into consideration?

Uncle Noll had not returned when Peregrine called again at the Tavistock, but he saw there the faithful Limpus, and learned from him that he did not expect his master home till late in the evening, for that he was gone to dine somewhere out of town, and more than that, from something he had said when he set forth, it appeared highly probable to Limpus that he might not even return to sleep.

This was a kind of damper to Peregrine, whose great object was always to enlighten his uncle upon any point which he had successfully achieved. However, the disappointment was nothing but a delay of gratification, and therefore he left word with the trusty servant that he would call at four o'clock the next day, and hoped to have the pleasure of dining with his uncle somewhere—there being no dinners at the Tavistock—inasmuch as the morning after the next, he must return to Slambury Park—which *he* always called Nobbatop's place, although Nobbatop himself never did—and therefore he trusted his "dear uncle" would be disengaged. To this affectionate message he added the information, that he had returned to his old lodgings, and that, if his uncle preferred any other arrangement, or had any other proposition to make, if he sent him a note, his wishes should be obeyed in every particular.

How Uncle Noll passed his evening, or how his nephew Peregrine passed his, history does not inform us; but this we know, that about one o'clock the next day, Peregrine received a note from Noll, telling him he should be glad to see him at his hotel about half-past five, and there they could settle some plan for the disposal of themselves for the rest of the afternoon.

It has been already noticed, that from the scantiness of his acquaintance, and, as it seemed, his total want of friends of his own age and standing, Peregrine had nobody in the world to

sympathize with him in his grief, or rejoice with him in his happiness. It was this fact which filled him with anxiety for the arrival of the hour at which he might open his heart and mind to his nearest relation, and the postponement of the time of their meeting for an hour and a half beyond that which he had suggested, vexed him ; so high were his spirits, and so ardent was his enthusiasm.

Peregrine, when he left "Slisbury Park," had made something like a half promise to write a few lines to say how he got to town, and what his uncle had said in answer to the invitation which Mrs. Nobbatop had sent him, and, in fact, to say a great many of the agreeable nothingnesses of which such notes are ordinarily composed.

Now Peregrine was a disciple of that prudential school, the leading doctrine of which is, "never to write a letter to a woman, and never to destroy a letter which a woman has written to you;" and although, in the present case, nothing could come of his writing anything he pleased, he nevertheless resolved, if he did write, to write to Mrs. Nobbatop. Maria might think it presumptuous if he wrote to *her* ; besides, he could more successfully write *at her* in the letter to her aunt, than he could to her in a letter to herself ; whereupon, after mature deliberation, he penned the following :—

"—— Street, —— 1840.

"**MY DEAR MADAM,**—I arrived safe and sound at my old residence, and which, till I had tasted the charms of Slisbury, I used to fancy exceedingly agreeable, and even lively ; but now—and it is your fault—everything seems dull, and dreary, and dismal ; and I wonder how I could have formed so false an estimate of its advantages.

"I really have no words to thank you for the hospitality and kindness which I have received from you and Mr. Nobbatop, nor the pleasurable hours which I have passed in the delightful society of your family circle. Pray tell Miss Grayson, that the first thing I did on reaching town was to send to buy those two beautiful songs which she sang so delightfully the night before last, which seems an age ago. However, thanks to your kindness, my banishment will not be of long duration.

"I have not yet seen my uncle, upon whom I called twice yesterday, but I have heard from him to-day, and am to dine with him this evening, when I shall deliver your kind message to him. I wish he may be able to avail himself of your friendly

offer, for I should very much like to present him to you, as a most worthy specimen of an old English gentleman.

"I look forward with the deepest anxiety to the hour when I am permitted to return to your paradise ; and if I do not succeed in bringing my uncle with me, I trust very soon to have the privilege of initiating him into what to *me* is perfect happiness.

"Do me the favour to remember me most sincerely to Miss Grayson, who has set me raving with those two last beautiful songs, which I cannot get out of my ears ; and present my kind regards to Mr. Nobbatop, senior and junior.

"Believe me, my dear Madam,

Yours most sincerely and gratefully,

"PERRIGRINE BUNCE."

This was in due course despatched, Peregrine subsequently occupying himself in re-establishing himself in his lodgings, or, as he called it in his letter, his "residence," until it was time to proceed to fulfil his engagement with his uncle. When the heart and mind are fixed upon any particular object, the day seems to stand still, and hours which ordinarily flit away too fastly, hang sadly on hand. Peregrine, who had no pursuits, and, as we already know, no acquaintance, stayed in his own den until the clock should strike five—the weather not being particularly favourable for excursion.

That wished-for hour at length came, and at last out sallied Peregrine Bunce, and having reached the Piazza in Covent Garden, mounted his way to the coffee-room, where he found his uncle punctual to the minute, waiting to receive him.

"Hey gad," said the old gentleman, "well, here you are—glad to see you—capital news—one down, t'other come on—eh?—Pitched battle by two men, as the old joke goes—No sooner beaten off from one place than on in another. However, Perry, as we may have a word or two to say to each other, come to my room—all snug and quiet—good fire—double doors—fog shut out—fine view of the market—come along."

Saying which, the old gentleman led the way to his apartment—an exceedingly good and comfortable one—in which they found Limpus very cosily installed in his master's arm-chair, but who most properly and dutifully resigned the post of warmth, upon the approach of his said master and nephew, and then forthwith bowed himself out of the chamber.

"Sit down, Perry—sit down," said Uncle Noll—"there, there. draw in—snug and comfortable—no bad quarters for me, eh?—I

like them—there—well now—and so—you've made another hit?"

"Yes," said Peregrine, "such a hit—and if you'll pardon a pun—such a miss—nothing in the world can be more charming."

"And the fortune, eh?" said Noll.

"The best that has ever yet presented itself to me," said Peregrine—"forty thousand pounds at the least."

"Pretty, you dog, eh?" said Uncle Noll, poking out his right foot, with the view of hitting Peregrine's shins.

"Pretty as I have described her," said Peregrine,—"and such a temper—so goodnatured—so unaffected; and, as I have told you in my letters, so far and away superior to the widow."

"I say," interrupted Uncle Noll, "have you quite cleared off Kitty?—Oh you sly dog—you never told me of *that*."

"It was a youthful indiscretion, sir," said Peregrine; "but I would not worry you about it. Thank Heaven, without annoying you, I have settled the whole of that business, and placed the poor dear girl in a position of comfort—I may say, happiness."

"You are a good fellow, Perry," said the uncle,—"and I tell you what, Perry,"—and here the old gentleman wiped a tear from his eye—"you shan't lose by *that*, my boy—good fellow—good fellow."

And as he repeated these words, he held out his hand to his nephew, and took his nephew's hand in his, and shook it—ay, and pressed it.

"Very excellent people the Nobbatops," said Peregrine (acting remarkably well, so as to infer his wish that his uncle should not load him with praise for doing an act of common justice); "they are exceedingly anxious to have the pleasure of seeing you at Slisbury Park—they really *are* the kindest, most hospitable, and friendly family upon earth."

"Hey gad, what!" said Oliver Bunce; "I shall be very glad—but, I say, Perry—no more stray governess—what I hate, those sudden bursts, upsets—don't you see?"

"I am now confident," said Peregrine, "nothing more of *that* kind can happen—still I should advise you not to go down there just yet. It is a charming place, and nothing can be nicer; but I think it is *raather* damp in the autumn."

"Hey—gad—damp," said Uncle Noll, as nephew Peregrine knew he would say,—"no, no—then make my excuses. I can't—no—changing beds—and in the country—no, no;—you'll manage for me. Of course, when business renders it necessary, and all that, I'll go;—but, I say, when do you think things will

come to a head—as the old cockney joke goes, when will be the *bridle day*, to lead her to the *halter*, eh?"

"That, I think, depends upon circumstances," said Peregrine, "but it would, as I look at the matter, be desirable, and I see no difficulty, if, in arranging matters, George Nobbatop's marriage with Miss Screecher, and mine with Maria Grayson, might take place simultaneously."

"You are sure you have bagged your bird?" said Noll.

"Why," said Peregrine, "it has generally seemed to me that so much in the way of acceptance is done before one word of proposal is spoken, that I have always wondered at hearing that any man was ever refused by a woman. Surely nobody would make an offer until, by continued association with the object of his affections, and by an appreciation of her manner towards him, he was quite sure of being accepted; as for myself ——"

"Why," interrupted Noll, "Miss Dory ——"

"Oh," said Peregrine, "that is quite a different matter. I cared for neither of those creatures, and I could hardly be surprised at the pert rejection of such a girl; but I am speaking of things generally; and I have no doubt—nay, my dear uncle, I am perfectly certain—that the amiable, pretty, lively, and accomplished black-eyed Houri ——"

"What d'ye call her?" cried Uncle Noll.

"Houri," said Peregrine, "is entirely my own."

"Well, my boy," said Uncle Noll, "we shall be all happy together; that is, if her uncle consents, and we can come up to his mark; and I shall see you, as I wish, '*settled at last*.' And now what shall we do with ourselves to-day?—where shall we dine?—no dinners here, as you know; you don't belong to any club—that's bad; however, we'll see about that—two or three good houses close by—under our Piazza—all dry and domestic—so, if you will just go into the coffee-room, and wait while I make a slight change in my dress, we can arrange our future plans without much difficulty; and I'll stand treat, Perry, for as much claret as you can drink in toasting your pretty black-eyed Maria —what?"

"Grayson," said Peregrine.

"Grayson!" echoed Uncle Noll, "you won't find me flinch, my fine fellow, neither in that, nor in trying to make you comfortable with her. I have taken care to inquire about Nobbatop—great man in the city—splendid concern—he an excellent fellow—and you a lucky dog. So, go—you can find your way, and I won't keep you a quarter of an hour."

So Peregrine went, and Noll rang for his trusty Limpus, and Peregrine betook himself to the coffee-room, as every room, whether in a club or hotel, is called, in which, as has been before observed, coffee is seldom or never drunk, and so, by way of whiling away the time, he asked one of the waiters for an evening newspaper. The paper was with obsequious civility supplied to the "fortunate youth," who caring, in the plenitude of his own happiness, very little for what the rest of the world was doing, skimmed over the fates of empires, the destinies of monarchies, and the disgraces of ministers, which are predicted off-hand by the gentlemen of the press; and carelessly cast his eyes over the numerous railroad accidents, and lists of missing heads and limbs for which rewards had been offered; as well as over the philanthropic appeals—personal applications to the editor, to state that Mr. Wallis's name was spelt "Walys,"—that the plaintiff's name, in such a case, was Holloway, instead of Holway; and a variety of other equally interesting communications, and listlessly threw down the journal, when, in its fall from his hand towards the table, one word caught his eye, which suddenly rivetted his attention. The word was a name—the name of a friend—he caught up the paper again, and read—

"CITY.—We are deeply concerned to state, that in consequence of some sudden, severe, and unexpected losses, the eminent house of Nobbatop, Snaggs, and Widdlebury, was compelled to stop payment this morning. The confusion this unlooked-for event has caused is indescribable in the mercantile world. It is at the moment impossible to calculate the liabilities of the firm, or the extent of ruin which its failure must involve; but we fear, from its very extensive engagements, that the results will be most disastrous. We ought to state, upon authority, that the report of Mr. Nobbatop's having absconded is wholly unfounded."

"Well," said Uncle Noll, entering the coffee-room at this precise moment, and coming up to Peregrine in his most cheerful and lark-like mood, "come, I'm ready—we'll go to Richardson's—get our dinner—best house in London for a rump-steak—and then, hey gad, if you like, go to the play—as the old joke says, 'all work and no play makes Jack a dull boy,'—what!"

"Play, sir," said Peregrine, "there is no play for me now, but a tragedy."

"Hey gad," said Noll, "what's in the wind now?—another governess—more Kitty Catherals?—what!"

"Read *that*, sir," said Peregrine, throwing the paper to his uncle.

"Read," said Noll, "I can't—I haven't got my barnacles—read it *to* me, eh?—what is it?"

"I cannot read it, sir," said Peregrine,—"I should expose myself if I attempted to do so."

"Well but tell me, eh?—tell me," said Uncle Noll.

"In a word, sir," said Peregrine, "my excellent friend Nobbatop is ruined. House stopped payment—misery, wretchedness, and all that—as for dining anywhere, it is out of the question. I must go home—I must—what next to do I scarcely know."

"Well, well," said Noll, "but that's all nonsense—if your friend has broke, you can't mend him again by not eating—gad, as the old joke goes, 'a man who has no stake in the country, can't do without a chop when he is in town.'—So, he's squashed, eh?—that's it."

"Yes," said Peregrine, "I am not surprised—the wasteful style of his living—his expensive table—his fine wines, which his position in life certainly did not justify—his pictures—his horses—his carriages; the whole establishment. Failures like these are little better than frauds; besides, the man himself was not two removes from a fool, taken out of his own sphere, in which, as it seems, he was little better. I always thought things were going wrong; certainly, as far as civility went, they were all remarkably kind in that way. However, my dear uncle, I must beg off, as to dinner; for I must get home to my lodgings, where I left a letter for the post, which, if I could, I would rather stop."

"Too late, Perry," said Noll; "since the convenient alterations in the post-office, for the benefit of the public, you have two hours less time to write in—yours must be gone."

"At all events," said Peregrine, who was dead beat by this *éclaircissement*, "I really cannot dine anywhere; forgive me—but it requires a little serious consideration as to what is the best step to take; and I must—I must entreat you to excuse me till to-morrow."

One of the most painful parts of Peregrine's mishaps appears to be the fact, that whenever he fancied himself at the apex of success, he always, as we have just observed, exerted himself to bring the triumphant issue of his proceedings under the immediate notice of Uncle Noll. Here again was a defeat—decided, on the face of it; but he still must have felt that he had won

the heart of Maria Grayson ; for of that fact there could be no question.

"Now," said Uncle Noll, "I can make all allowances for the strength of your feelings, Perry ; and I don't want you to do a violence to them, by dining with me in a public coffee-room ; but tell me—tell me now—how do *you* really feel about the black-eyed girl, Maria ?—what d'ye call her ?"

"Grayson," said Peregrine, "Grayson is her name."

"Well, but you say she likes *you*," said Noll.

"I think she does," replied Peregrine.

"And you like *her*?" asked the uncle.

"Why that is just *it*," said Peregrine,—"*I do* like her, and if this infernal affair had not happened, I might, in time, have loved her ; but, accustomed as she has been to a certain line of life, and a style—not perhaps of society—but of establishment, she would only be made miserable now, by being brought into the sphere in which, as my wife, she could only move."

"Ah," said Noll, "then you would sacrifice your own affection for her comfort ;—there, Perry, you show yourself what I have always thought you, a disinterested, kind-hearted fellow—to be sure—to be sure—she *has* lived splendidly."

"Absurdly so," said Peregrine ; "I wrote to you about their mode of carrying on the war—and the stables—and the shooting—and the boating—and the carriages ;—it is all quite disgusting ; and if other people are to be ruined by such failures, I go the length, sir, of calling them felonious."

"You are right," said Noll, "that's the high principle ; you may have your errors, Perry ; but you take the true view of matters ; and so do as you like this evening, and let me see you in the morning, and then we will talk more of this affair ; more will come out, and you will then see your way better ; so, good bye—don't worry yourself—things are not always so bad as they look at first ; as the joke goes, 'old Nick sometimes is not so black as he is painted.'"

So parted the uncle and nephew ; the uncle to his dinner—the nephew to his lodgings. The letter was gone—but Tim was at home ; and to Tim was intrusted a special mission to be executed forthwith, by means of the Southampton railroad that evening, or early the next morning, which had for its object the bringing away from Slambury Park, Mr. Peregrine Bunce's clothes, dressing-case, and other effects, which he was to get from the superintending servant of the house, without the knowledge, of course, of Mrs. Nobbatop, or anybody else, and by which extrication of

his worldly goods, he might, on the following day, be completely clear of the wreck of which he had so feelingly descanted to his jovial relation.

What the newspaper announced with regard to the failure of the house of Nobbatop, Snaggs, and Widdlebury, was, strange to say, true. It was a failure most tremendous and complete—a continued perseverance in speculation upon speculation, holding *this*, for a rise in price, to effect which, came the necessity of selling *that* at a loss,—enormous dealings in funds, beautiful to look at, but fatal to touch—enterprises of a character and to an extent scarcely conceivable by ordinary minds, had at last brought them to an end from which there certainly appeared no redemption.

Mrs. Nobbatop—and how women, good excellent women, bear these tremendous reverses—received the news of their fall as she would any ordinary intelligence of the day. Her husband was, although unfortunate, honoured and honest. Not a shadow of blame was cast upon him, and her first movement upon the occasion was to inquire whither they were to remove from Slisbury—what furniture might remain at their disposal, to be useful in a smaller residence; and her first remark was, that all reasonable people preferred small rooms to large ones, even in large houses,—that wealth was the parent of innumerable responsibilities, and that servants were plagues and torments.

"My dear husband," said she, "I certainly love this place, and beautiful as it is, it is dearer to *me* because it has been chiefly made by you; but when we began life, we had no such home or establishment. Why should we care about it now?—Thank God, my good kind dear, you are well in health; no man accuses you of wrong; you have an affectionate wife, who will do all she can to cheer and comfort you; and Providence will be just if we deserve its goodness. Come—here is our Maria, ready to aid me in any and every work that is necessary to be done."

"Ah!" said the agitated master of the house, taking Maria's hand and pressing it to his lips, "our dear Maria!"

Never perhaps was such a scene of rivalry in domestic affection exhibited, as when the real truth was developed; nor ever a display of sincerer regret and respect made, than by the numerous servants of the establishment, when the break-up was announced to them. Of course an establishment like that of Slisbury naturally rolls on its usual course for a week or so,

without any visible change, whatever may be the alteration in the circumstances of its head, and therefore there was no immediate ejection or overthrow, although, when the fact of the bankruptcy had been proclaimed in the public papers, further concealment was impossible.

The high eulogiums upon the mercantile and private characters of all the partners in the firm, and the unqualified testimonies to their honourable dealings, of course alleviated the fall; but Mrs. Nobbatop, cheered and delighted by such evidence in favour of her beloved husband, could not help murmuring to Maria, that she believed the whole of their misfortunes to have been the result of the influence of Mr. Saxby Mumps, a man she never could endure, and whose power over Mr. Nobbatop she had always dreaded.

It may sound strange, but it is not more strange than true, that there is an intuitive intelligence in women, which directs their attention to points of character and attributes in the minds of men, which do not strike their male associates. Nobbatop looked upon Saxby Mumps as his tutelar deity; and *that*, with all his mercantile experience and extensive knowledge. From the moment Mrs. Nobbatop first saw him, she pronounced her opinion of him to Maria. She set him down for a double-faced, under-handed speculator, and was never so well pleased as when he did *not* honour Slisbury with a visit.

The failure of our poor dear friend Nobbatop and his partners was a plain straightforward failure; nothing contrived or connived at, in the way in which, if we are to believe that most admirable painter of nature, Foote, such matters were managed some sixty or seventy years ago.

In Foote's comedy of the *Bankrupt*, one of his plays which might be acted in the most fastidious times, occurs the following scene, dependent upon the embarrassments of one Sir Robert Riscounter. It is quite worthy of attention, not only as illustrative of the manners of the day, but of the talents of the writer.

In a room we find two worthies of the names of Pillage and Resource, *tête-à-tête*:

"Take my word for it," says Mr. Resource, "in the whole round of the law—and, thank Heaven, the dominions are pretty extensive—there is not a nicer road to hit than the region of bankrupts."

"I should have thought it a turnpike," says Resource, "for you see how easily a country attorney can find it."

"Pshaw!" cries Pillage, "what, amongst manufacturers and meagre mechanics?—fellows not worth powder and shot: and yet these paltry provincials, Master Resource, are often obliged to solicit my aid."

"Indeed!" says Resource.

"Why, t'other day," says Pillage, "a poor dog, over head and ears in debt, from the country, was recommended to me by a client. The fellow had scraped together all he could get, with a view of running beyond sea, but I stopped him directly."

"Really! —"

"Yes," says Pillage, "in a couple of months washed him as white as a sheep just shorn—made him take a house in Cheap-side, called him a citizen in the London Gazette, and his name of John Mudge being as common as carrots, not a soul in the country suspected it was he—passed a few necessary notes to get him number and value, white-washed him, and sent him home to his wife."

"Cleanly and cleverly done," says Resource.

"When the country chaps," says Pillage, "brought in their bills, he pulled out his certificate, and gave them a receipt in full of all demands; and now he is in business, and doing uncommonly well, for I left him two hundred pounds out of the six he brought with him to begin the world with credit again; but," continues he, "I see *you* have found a remedy for Master Monk of the Minories—how did you manage that?"

"Got some friends," says Resource, "to advance him cash on a project to monopolize sprats and potatoes."

"And it took?" asks Pillage.

"No fear of that," answers Resource; "the people of this country are always ready to bite at a bubble; but, as a body, we shall break before the season for sprats; and as to the potatoes, of which we laid in a shipload or two, they are all in our cellars in Southwark, and have shot out branches as tall as the trees in the park."

At this pleasing description of probable results, the worthy Pillage laughs, and inquires of his friend, *à propos des boute*s, what he thinks the object of Sir Robert Riscounter's invitation is?—upon which point, Resource, being aware of what he calls "a pretty large crack," satisfies his friend; and a minute or two after, Sir Robert himself appears, and states that he has sent for them to ask their assistance; that his affairs have come to a crisis, and that, without some speedy and substantial aid, his credit will be gone.

Upon which this conversation ensues :—

“ You surprise me,” says Pillage ; “ I never guessed at danger. Pray, Sir Robert, what brought on the disease?—was it an alley fever, or gradual decay?”

“ A complication of causes,” says Sir Robert. “ I, however, could have weathered them all, had the house in Holland but stood : their failure must be followed by more. Have you heard of anything to day?”

“ No doubt of their stopping,” says Pillage ; “ their bills were offered at Garraway’s under forty per cent. As your name, Sir Robert, is not blown upon yet, suppose you coin a couple of quires—don’t you think the circulation might screen you?”

“ No,” says Sir Robert, “ that mint is exhausted, and private paper is reduced to its primitive value. My real case can be no longer concealed—I must stop, and should be glad of your advice how to manage this matter.”

“ Why, Sir Robert,” says Pillage, “ there are two methods in use—the choice will depend on how your affairs stand with the world.”

“ Bitter bad, Mr. Pillage,” says Sir Robert.

“ I guessed as much by your sending for *us*,” answers Pillage ; “ they treat us, Master Resource, like a couple of quacks—never apply but in desperate cases. Now, Sir Robert, if you find you are pretty near on a par, with a small balance per contra—summon your creditors, lay your condition before them, convince them you have a fund to answer all their demands, and crave a respite for three or four years.”

“ This,” says Sir Robert, “ will only be delaying the evil.”

“ That,” replies Pillage, “ depends upon how you manage the cards. Don’t you see, the length of time, with the want of money for trade, will induce the bulk of your creditors to sell their debts at a loss of thirty or forty per cent.”

“ But,” says Sir Robert, “ how shall I profit by that?”

“ How!” cries Pillage, “what hinders you from privately buying them up yourself!—a fine fortune saved out of the fire ; and talking of fires, for a present supply, you may burn a warehouse or two after they have been gutted of their contents, and so recover the full amount of the insurance.”

To all these suggestions, and that of secreting all the portable stuff, such as jewels and cash, Sir Robert gives a decided negative, and concludes his negotiation with his counsellors by denouncing the system of fraudulent bankruptcies, which at that period appear not to have been uncommon, and declaring that, however

much men may suffer from his calamities, they never shall suffer by his crimes ; a declaration which, as may easily be supposed, draws down upon him the most violent invectives from his advisers.

Butler's notions of bankrupts and bankruptcies in *his* days were not very widely different from those of the modern Aristophanes. Butler says—

“A bankrupt is made by breaking, as a bird is hatched by breaking the shell. He gains more by giving over a trade than he ever did by dealing in it. He drives a trade, as Oliver Cromwell drove a coach, till it broke to pieces. He is very tender and careful in preserving his credit, and keeps it as regularly as a race-nag is dieted, that in the end he may run away with it ; for he observes a punctual curiosity in performing his word, until he has proved his credit as far as it can go ; and then he has catched his fish, and throws away his net ; as a butcher, when he has fed his beast as fat as it can grow, cuts the throat of it.

“When he has brought his design to perfection, and disposed of all his materials, he lays his train, like a powder-traitor, and gets out of the way while he blows up all those that trusted him. After the blow is given, there is no manner of intelligence to be had of him for some months, until the rage and fury is somewhat digested, and all hopes vanished of ever recovering anything of body or goods, for revenge or restitution ; and then propositions of treaty and accommodation appear like the sign of the hand and pen out of the clouds, with conditions more unreasonable than thieves are wont to demand for restitution of stolen goods. He shoots like a fowler at a whole flock of geese at once, and stalks with his horse to come as near as possibly he can, without being perceived by any one, or giving the least suspicion of his designs, until it is too late to prevent it ; and then he flies from them as they should have done before from him. His way is so commonly used in the city, that he robs in a road like a highwayman, and yet they never will arrive at wit enough to avoid it ; for it is done upon surprise, and as thieves are commonly better mounted than those they rob, he very easily makes his escape, and flies beyond pursuit, and then there is no possibility of overtaking him.”

Infinitely more like the conscientious baronet in the play, than the imaginary bankrupt of Butler, was our worthy friend Nobbatop, who, when the blow fell, received it firmly but meekly, and immediately proposed to his nearest relations all the necessary steps to be taken in their altered situation.

Mr. Peregrine Bunce's servant Tim arrived at Slambury Park quite safe by the morning train or railroad, and returned with his master's "things" and dressing-case, umbrella, &c. &c., all which were carefully delivered to him by Mr. Nobbatop's own man, but who nevertheless thought it his duty to apprise his mistress, to whom he and all the rest of the servants were devoted, of the whole proceeding.

Maria Grayson was in the room with her aunt when the man stated the case. Mrs. Nobbatop merely smiled and said, "Oh, very well—you did quite right." Maria struggled with the strong feelings of a warm heart and generous mind, till he had shut the door, when, by an effort, she stammered out as it were—"Gracious Heaven!—is that possible?"—and, throwing herself on a sofa, turned her almost convulsed countenance on one of the pillows, and moistened it with her tears.

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## CHAPTER XVIII.

ONE cannot wonder at this natural burst of passion. The announcement of the callous heartlessness of Peregrine's practical proceeding, following so closely as it did the receipt of his exceedingly affectionate, friendly, and complimentary letter, was not to be borne by a girl of high spirit and strong feeling like Maria, who had taught herself to look up to the venal fortune-hunter as an agreeable and accomplished person, who, without premeditation or design, "prepense and aforethought," had, as the result of their—to *her* most agreeable—association, learned to esteem and regard him, and whose longer acquaintance with him would, most probably, have induced a more serious affection on *his* part, which her heart had already admitted its readiness to reciprocate.

And that this bright vision should be dissipated and dissolved in so short a space of time—that the devotion with which he had addressed and treated her should have thus suddenly been forgotten—nay, that the kindness and courtesy of ordinary society, by which Peregrine's letter, that very day received, was characterized, should have curdled in a few hours into a cold-blooded anxiety about a few clothes, a dressing-case, and an umbrella, seemed far beyond anything she could have expected in the con-

duct of any man, but, least of all, from the favoured and the favourite Mr. Peregrine Bunce.

A woman has—can have—no notions of such debasement; she, with her generous disposition, her confiding nature, and her utter ignorance of worldliness, full of feeling and reliance, would risk all, lose all, worldly advantages, to prove her devotion to the being who had once established a preference in her heart, founded upon what she considered a just estimate of his qualities. If this Mr. Peregrine Bunce had remained—not faithful, for that is not the word—but remained as he *was*, eight-and-forty hours before, Maria Grayson, in spite of the sudden blow that had fallen, would have been as happy to be his “co-mate in exile,” or to have lived upon the means they might together have commanded, as if she had been a queen. Bless her—sweet girl—hers was a heart worth winning, and this calculating slave had nearly won it: but happy, probably, was it, that this unexpected blight had fallen upon the fortunes of Slambury. Who knows but that when once in possession of the ease and comforts after which he was always hunting, he might have neglected qualities which he had not the taste or feeling to appreciate, and have driven a being such as Maria was, full of intellectuality, into despair and misery, by the indifference which, in such a person as Peregrine, was not at all unlikely to follow the attainment—not so much of his idol—as of her money.

It is hard, very hard to drive from the mind and heart—if the heart *have been* touched—of such a girl as Maria, the thought, the memory, the love (?) which has been registered and established there. Maria’s pride, amounting almost to anger, for the moment placed Peregrine exactly in his right position—but *then* could she not find some excuses for him? Might he not have sent for these things of his, for some reason altogether disconnected with the great cause of their ruin?—The truth is, if she were not what is called in love, she was as near it as young lady ever was, and no stronger proof could be adduced of Mrs. Nobbatop’s combined judgment and feeling, than the fact that she never once alluded to the conduct of Peregrine Bunce, the real character of which (she not being in love with him) was evident to *her*, from the moment the butler mentioned the history of the removal of his “things.”

And now that Peregrine *has gotten* his “things,” and is again installed in his “residence,” what is to happen? It may perhaps have occurred to the reader, that when Uncle Noll first heard of what is conventionally called the “smash” at Nobbatop’s, his

impulse was to secure Maria Grayson for Peregrine—his look the expression of his countenance, even more than what he said conveyed the idea—and Peregrine himself was aware that it did. But that was a fancy on the part of the old gentleman not to be cherished by his nephew. Maria was pretty, and nice, and accomplished, and, moreover, as he knew, attached to *him*, but he also knew enough to know that all his uncle had to bestow would not be sufficient, according to *his* notions of things, to “carry or the war,” without a corresponding “come down” on the other side.

Peregrine, practised as he was, not only in enterprise, but in defeats, felt rather uncomfortable as to his morning interview with Uncle Noll. He could not endure his “gibes and jeers,” and, strange to say—or perhaps not so strange—whenever any one of these discomfitures took place, the greatest relief he found was in hurrying away from the scene of his disaster, and flying across the country in some near direction. However, the interview with Uncle Noll was what a modern lexicographer would call “*ungetoutofable*;” so he therefore made up his mind to the worst, and walked himself off to the Tavistock Hotel.

“Well,” said Noll, as his hopeful nephew entered the room “how are you, Master Perry?—‘well as can be expected,’ as the old joke goes?—All true—dreadful crash—terrible tumble—eh?”

“Yes,” said Peregrine, “it is a very sad thing.”

“Did you stop your letter?” said Noll.

“No,” answered Peregrine, “but I sent off my servant early this morning.”

“Right—right,” said Noll; “to be sure, commiseration and condolence may do no real good; but such attentions are felt. I anticipated what you would do; people who have treated you so well deserve, at least, all the little kindnesses which you can pay them. They’ll feel it, Perry—rely upon it, they will appreciate your conduct.”

Nothing is more grating to the ear, or more discordant on the tongue, than unmerited praise or an undeserved compliment; and what added to Peregrine’s uneasiness upon the present occasion was the recollection, through Noll’s observation, that he might just as well have been civil, and apparently solicitous about the family, at no expense, and just as safely and surely recovered his dressing-case, umbrella, &c. &c. &c.

“However, Perry,” continued the old gentleman, “this is no fault of yours; you did not induce your friend Toppabob, or whatever you call him, to monopolize, and being in no degree

accessory to the ruin of the family, I can't see why you should link yourself to his fortunes, or rather misfortunes. The girl, as a matter of course, was over head and ears in love with you."

"Not exactly *that*," said Peregrine. "I think she might have been won, and the thing perhaps settled; but there is a certain flightiness about her manner, and a freedom in her conversation, which consoles me—."

"What!" cried Noll, "for the loss of your friend's fortune?"

"No," said Peregrine, "not for *that*, but for the breaking off of the connection. It certainly is flattering to be well received; and certainly forty thousand pounds are something in the scale; but still, my dear uncle, with *my* feelings of devotion to simplicity and diffidence, I'll be hanged if I think I could endure what may be called a 'show-wife.'"

"Ah, Perry," said Noll, "our tastes are deucedly alike—I'm all for quiet—demure—eh gad, you—don't you know what I mean, Perry?—timid, gentle, retiring, and all that sort of thing."

"I quite enter into your feelings," said Peregrine, "and therefore it is that I less regret—I mean as far as I am myself concerned" (when did he care for anybody else?), "that circumstances have so turned up as to hinder the conclusion of an affair which I begin to think might have led to future unhappiness."

"I've a notion, Perry," said Noll, "that you have a little touch of jealousy in your composition, eh?"

"No," said Peregrine, "not exactly jealousy; but I don't think I should like to see my wife looking too much pleased while talking to another man. What they do with their eyes is what would, as a husband, worry me. It is not so much the matter of their conversation as the manner; and now, even with Maria Grayson, whom I suppose, in all probability, I shall never fall in with again—I have sat upon thorns when I have seen her look kindly at a fellow called Towsey, a neighbour of theirs, for whom she don't care one single sixpence, and at whom she laughed whenever he was absent—I can't bear that sort of—"

"Ay, ay," interrupted Noll, "that's it—that's the 'green-eyed monster.'"

"Who?" said Peregrine,—"Towsey?"

"No, no," said Noll, "Shakspeare's green-eyed monster, as the old joke goes; rely upon it, you must be careful, cautious, wary, and wise, in *your* choice of a partner for life."

"I feel," said Peregrine, "that marriage must be, when there exists a congeniality of feeling, a sympathy in tastes, a sort of—"

"I know," interrupted Noll, "I understand—you are right—rely upon it you are right—and it was because I never could hit upon anything suitable to myself, that I never married. 'Bachelors' wives,' as the old joke goes, eh gad!"

And during this dialogue the old gentleman believed in the sincerity of his hopeful nephew, and ended by rejoicing that, however adverse in themselves, circumstances should have occurred to break off a match in which that amiable young gentleman now declared himself doubtful of securing the happiness he so disinterestedly sought to obtain.

As Spenser says—

"What man so wise, what earthly wit so ware,  
As to despise the crafty cunning train  
By which Deceit doth mask in vizor fair,  
And cast her colours dy'd deep in grain  
To seem like truth, whose shape she can well feign,  
And fitting gestures to her purpose frame,  
The guileless man with guile to entertain?"

Never did there exist upon earth a better practical illustration of Spenser's text, or a more apposite reply to his pertinent question, than in the case of the two men now before us.

Well—but now came the next point to be settled—what was now to be done? Now Peregrine regretted that he had rebetaken himself to his lodgings—what was to happen?—here was winter approaching, and that dull time of the year in which London is perhaps the dullest of all miserable places of refuge. The natural answer to that inquiry would have been the cordial invitation of Uncle Noll to his comfortable home, the use of his horses, carriages, dogs, guns, or whatever else he possessed, and the rational enjoyments of that oddly-shaped little parlour, in which the reader was first introduced to them; but no—that was now tabooed ground to Peregrine. There were the Mintons in force—the magistrate himself—his wife—and if not Mrs. Grout, at least Captain M'Larrup—"the boy with the bugle-horn."

There is something like—at least poetical—justice, to place the feeling on no higher principle, in finding that the meanness and selfishness of our hero had not only lost him the object of his affections—as he called his anxiety for pelf—but had even had the effect of excluding him from the hospitable residence of his too partial relation. As for Uncle Noll, he would not have cared for his coming down, and braving the storm; but Peregrine could

not bring himself up to the conflict, and so, for the first time for many years, he saw Christmas approach without having any very defined notion as to "whereabouts" he might enjoy its festivities; a consideration not rendered the more agreeable by an anxious feeling which had taken possession of his mind, that his best chance of securing his uncle's *post-mortem* bounty, in case of his not being "settled" previous to his death, consisted in a perpetual attendance upon and attention to him, carried to the full extent of shutting out the civilities of everybody else, he being fully aware of the devotion and assiduity with which worldly men sacrifice every other pursuit to that of pressing their visits and civilities upon their rich and single acquaintances, as they advance in age.

"I can't stand Twigglesford, sir," said Peregrine.

"What not come to me at Christmas, Perry?" cried Oliver—"why if you never come again, come then,—'Christmas comes but once a year,' as the old joke goes; you must come too."

"The renewal of my intercourse with the Mintons would be the death of me," said Peregrine.

"But we don't visit," said Noll; "it was only on your account that I cared about making their acquaintance anything more than it had been for some time—pshaw!—come!"

"If you will forgive me," said Peregrine, "I would rather endeavour to get rid of the associations of the last few weeks, and go somewhere farther a-field."

"Forgive!" said Noll, "hey gad—what d'ye mean by forgive?—do as you like—I have no doubt you find me a dull, and prosy, and —"

"Ah, there it is," interrupted Peregrine; "that is exactly what I thought you would say—you *know*, my dear sir, it is not so—one has feelings, and —"

"There, there," said Noll, "I quite enter into your views. It would be unpleasant for you to be subjected to the remarks—and all that—so—don't worry yourself, and I tell you how I'll remedy the whole affair. I won't go home this Christmas myself—there now;—here we can meet whenever we like. London's a large village, and 'nobody knows what his neighbour does.' As the old joke goes, 'London is the best place in the winter, and there is no better place in the summer'—so here I stay—but, d'ye see, I don't confine *you*; but relieve your mind as to my not being down at Twigglesford. I have plenty of folks in town that I know, and being in better health than usual, I'll stay—keep up my hospitalities in the country as

usual—‘ dispense my presents without being present myself,’ as the joke goes; and, in short, make a winter in London, giving you full leave to wing your flight in whatever direction you please, always hoping upon the old principle of ‘bad luck now, better another time’; you may still find something suitable, for, by Jove, in the last three trials, it does seem as if there had been something like a fate about it.”

“ You are too kind to me, my dear uncle,” said Peregrine; “ but now,” added he,—a bright thought suddenly glancing through his brain,—“ if you really do mean to stay in town, why not take my lodgings?—there they are, perfectly at your service. The people of the house know me—know you, and respect you; surely, it would be more comfortable than an hotel, and —”

“ You are a good fellow,” said Noll, “ an excellent fellow; and I thank you for the offer: but I like this best; here I am wholly independent; my room and my servant are always ready; a capital breakfast—no necessity for dining at home, if you choose to dine out. No questions as to when you come in at night, or how long you are gone away—all free and easy, and, bating the smell of the market, which at this time of the year comes to nothing, I like it amazingly.”

Now, here the by-play between the two worthies is deserving of notice by those who care about looking a little closer than ordinarily into human nature. Peregrine’s exceedingly liberal offer to his uncle of his excellent lodgings (or residence, as it was called, at Slambury Park), had its origin in his desire, under the change which had taken place in his circumstances, to get them off his hands. Uncle Noll’s evasion of the generous proposition involved a point of considerable importance to Peregrine, inasmuch as the old gentleman laid considerable stress upon the independence of the hotel-life, in the course of which no questions were asked as to when you came home at night—as to how long you were likely to stay away—where you were going, &c. &c. &c.

Peregrine had, as we know, obtained a sort of vague intimation from Limpus as to the erratic, hebdomadal habits of his uncle, when he was in London, and had never since been quite at his ease as to the influence which he fancied might be in secret operation over his mind. His doubts and apprehensions upon the point were not at all weakened by the readiness with which Noll gave up his prescribed and regularly acted upon rule of rusticating at Christmas, nor by the reasons which he

offered for declining the lodgings; in which, if he had accepted the offer (paying for the same, be it observed), Tim would have been left with instructions to ascertain at all hazards the destination of Mr. Oliver Bunce, whenever he thought proper to ruralize.

This scene was not unworthy of notice, but neither Peregrine nor the reader is likely to get one inch nearer the real objects of these periodical visits to some "undiscovered bower" by anything that the elder gentleman of the two is likely to let out. What preyed upon Peregrine's imagination was the apprehension, knowing as he did that something unpleasant had happened in early life to some member of the family, that the object of his uncle's punctual and confidential attentions (being, as indeed Limpus had hinted, a relation of that said uncle) might be, as to consanguinity, nearer to the old gentleman's fortune than himself; or, at all events, likely (because, in a family, the criminality of any of its members is universally considered as a misfortune) to be favoured, much to his disadvantage, by Noll, in the making his will, provided that he could not bring about his "settlement" before the old gentleman died.

So, here again was a new—indeed a double excitement—a positive and negative impulse to fresh exertions. But which way was he to go?—where again was he to throw the handkerchief, where so few seemed willing to pick up? In the heartlessness of the man himself was to be found the perfect readiness for a new start if the line of proceeding could be pointed out; and as for that heartlessness, can a stronger proof be required of it, that never once did the thought of all his past happiness at Slambury cross his mind, except when he felt inclined to anathematize his unlucky stars for leading him into such a disappointment?

And what was doing at Slambury? As we have before said, such an establishment, by its own force and weight, must go on for some days without change or alteration. But the blow had fallen; and, as we have already seen, been met nobly by the mistress of the house. She—noble, splendid woman!—did not even adopt that which is supposed to be the wisest course in misfortune, bow her head to the coming wave; no, she held up against it, and let it dash past her unmoved and unhurt.

The scene at home, when Nobbatop imparted the whole history of the failure, occasioned by the resolute and determined monopoly maintained and persisted in, under the advice of Mr. Saxby Mumps, was, as may be imagined, dreadfully painful,

more especially to him whose devotion to his wife and children—for child he called his adopted Maria—was earnest and exemplary. He endeavoured to qualify the absolute necessity for their relinquishment of their beautiful house, by saying that such a measure was not immediately necessary; that they would have time to look out for some other residence; and that, although the arrangement of the voluminous accounts of the firm would inevitably occupy a considerable period of time, still he hoped eventually something might be saved for them from the wreck.

His tenderness towards Maria, whose conduct had been beyond all praise during the first dark days of distress, was more than even that of a father, had he really stood in that relation to her. The nobleness of her heart, and the splendid generosity of her character, had displayed themselves in a manner even yet beyond the reader's imagination. She *was* a treasure.

"Have you heard," said Nobbatop, seeming more alive to domestic matters than he ever had been in the days of his prosperity, "from our friend Mr. Bunce?—I am exceedingly sorry —"

"Never be sorry about him," said Mrs. Nobbatop; "he has shown *himself*."

"But," said the worthy husband, "surely you told me that Maria —"

"Dearest, dearest uncle," interrupted Miss Grayson, "never mention his name again. The experience of the last three days has shown me how easily confidence may be misplaced, and how completely appearances may deceive."

"But what —?" asked Nobbatop.

"Ask nothing," said Maria; "as he banished himself from this house at the earliest opportunity, so is he banished eternally from my mind. Had he ever possessed himself my heart, I would have died rather than he should now retain it."

"But *his* heart," said Nobbatop; "I am no judge of these things."

"Heart, uncle," said Maria, "he has none; it is useless to worry you with the details of his conduct; all I hope is, that never, never again shall I hear his name."

Poor Mr. Nobbatop, who came home tired and worried, and whose head was distracted with the complication of his difficulties, readily acceded to Maria's request to hear no more of his worthy young friend; and after a slight half dinner, half

supper, retired to rest—or at least to bed—being obliged early in the morning to be again in the city.

And was it not painful and pitiful to hear him and his amiable excellent wife discussing, as they looked round their splendid rooms, which a few days since had blazed with lights, and rung with sounds of music, joy, and pleasure, how affairs had better be arranged, as to the disposal of the furniture, and whether it would not be more advantageous to have the sale of the pictures, and objects of *virtù*, in London. And is not the elasticity of the human mind one of the greatest wonders of our composition? —One little week before, the idea of being turned out of this darling spot—the place of their own creation—the happy retreat from worldly care—the home of peace and comfort—would have gone well nigh to break their hearts. The shock of ruin had destroyed them with an earthquake suddenness, and yet their minds survived the infliction, and, wounded as they were, contracted—or perhaps one had better say, expanded—themselves into a calm and rational calculation of what was best to be done under “existing circumstances.”

In the morning Mr. Nobbatop again went to town; but his own carriage, which, with the others of his establishment, was still at Slisbury, took him only to the neighbourhood of the railroad-station. It was a wet—a dreary—sleety, snowy day; what then? he cared not for himself. His wife—his niece, were both at the door to see him off—to conjure him to take care of himself; for although to the world he had now become nothing, he was more than ever all the world to them.

It was indeed a dull and dreary morning, and the ruts made by the wheels of the carriages, which had brought the kind and smiling, grateful visitors to Slisbury during the preceding week, were flooded by the rain, which pattered against the windows, and rattled upon the roof of the conservatory, as if in mockery of the sorrow which prevailed within. Still, the attentive gardener was training and pruning, and turning round their frames the choice plants, so recently the favourites of Maria, and still—justice be done to them, and praise be to them for it—the servants were more attentive to their mistress and Miss Maria than ever, and more solicitous to meet their wishes and obey their orders than they had shown themselves before.

The sound of a carriage aroused the attention of the fair inmates. No carriage appeared; but, upon an inquiry, it turned out that two gentlemen—and the kind-hearted butler

called them gentlemen, without any particularly strong emphasis—wished just to look over the “premises.” Who they were, or what they were, Mrs. Nobbatop never inquired. She concluded that the visit was something connected with the general overthrow, and directed that they might be admitted to see all that they required to see of the house and its appurtenances; she and Maria retiring to their sanctum, which even the law could scarcely invade; which was a sort of boudoir, a charming little octagon room, with which Mrs. Nobbatop’s dressing-room and that of Maria communicated, and in which, when there was no company in the house, they generally passed their mornings.

What parts in the play the two mysterious gentlemen performed, we know not. They certainly came with an air of authority, and certainly visited the best apartments of Slambury, and looked at the furniture sagaciously and appraisingly; and one of them made memoranda in a book which he lugged out of a side pocket. However, whether their intentions were good or evil, time alone can unravel; for, having taken their superficial survey, they thanked the trusty butler, who never left them, and retired.

Their departure was duly announced. Maria felt relieved—she scarcely knew why; but her heart seemed lighter when they were gone.

It was not long after their secession, that the sound of horses’ feet again awakened her attention—somebody was approaching—and then the noise died away. Whoever the visitors were, they had gone round to the stable-yard. In a moment the thought flashed into her mind, that it was Peregrine—she had been deceived—or rather she had *not* been deceived in him; but those who doubted him were the deluded ones.

It will do her no harm, poor dear girl, to admit that the thought, the hope, the expectation, that *she* had formed a just estimate of his qualities, cheered, animated, and delighted her. Some mistake of servants, so common of occurrence, had caused the confusion—he never meant to desert and abandon them—he merely sent for his dressing-case because he wanted it, and would have brought it back the next day; and his note was so kind, so good;—no, no—it was quite impossible. She had been mistaken—she had been led into renouncing and denouncing him; but here he was, to vindicate himself against any charge of heartlessness or worldliness, and much did she rejoice in the happy result.

Scarcely had she satisfied herself that Peregrine had proved himself equally true in sunshine or in storm, when the butler, still acting prime-minister, entered the room, and muttered mysteriously, almost in a whisper, something to Mrs. Nobbatop.

"Dear me, dear me," said the lady,—“but—you know we do not receive visitors. We are not—don’t you see?—why did you let him in?”

"He said, ma’am," said the butler, "that he knew you would not let in company, and therefore he came round through the stable-yard to the servants’ door. He says he won’t detain you five minutes, ma’am."

"Who is it, aunt?" said Maria.

"Mr. Towsey," was the answer.

"Oh!" said Maria, walking to the window to hide the disappointment which she could not have concealed had her countenance been visible, that it was *not* Mr. Peregrine Bunce.

"Well," said Mrs. Nobbatop, "have they lighted any fire in the library?"

"Oh yes, ma’am," said the butler.

"Show Mr. Towsey into the library, then," said Mrs. Nobbatop; "what he can have to say to *me*, and alone, I cannot in the slightest degree comprehend."

"So as he does not want anything to say to *me*, aunt," answered Maria Grayson, "I am not much interested in the affair." And again, as soon as Mrs. Nobbatop had left the room, Maria fell into a reverie, the object of which was a discussion with herself as to the probability, or rather possibility, that Peregrine could really be the heartless creature which the *prima facie* appearance of things seemed to prove him.

When Mrs. Nobbatop entered the library, she found her visitor looking not altogether as was his wont. He advanced towards her as she approached him, and held out his hand, which she took, and felt to be remarkably cold—nay, more than cold, tremulous.

"Well, Mr. Towsey," said the lady, with her usual air of cheerfulness, "sad things have happened since we last parted. Probably you have not heard of my poor dear husband’s sudden misfortunes."

"Indeed I have," said Mr. Towsey, in a tone unusual in his voice, "and that is what brings me here to-day."

"Indeed!" said Mrs. Nobbatop, "we are the more obliged to you for your visit; the world generally keeps aloof from a falling house."

"My object," said Towsey, faltering in his speech, and nervously agitated in his manner—"my object, my dear madam—I—really—scarcely dare venture to explain myself, for fear of offending you."

"Assure yourself," said his companion, who saw how natural and unaffected his agitation was, "assure yourself that there is no chance of offending *me*."

"I am placed," said Mr. Towsey, "in an awkward and delicate position—and I feel the difficulty I have to encounter. You are—you must be—aware that for some time I have regarded Miss Grayson with feelings of admiration—affection."

"I certainly am not ignorant of your feelings towards my niece," said Mrs. Nobbatop, "but —"

"Permit me to stop you for one moment," interrupted Mr. Towsey,—"permit me to add, that I am fully aware of the nature of Miss Grayson's feelings towards *me*. I know that my attentions would be ill received, the offer of my hand rejected. I have therefore abandoned my hopes with my expectations of success; and that very circumstance it is that embarrasses me at this moment."

"I really do not see what —" said Mrs. Nobbatop.

"Why it is," continued the visitor, "that our friends—nay yourselves—who may be more or less aware of the feelings I entertained for your charming niece, may attribute to other motives than those which really actuate me at the moment, the offer I am about to make to you."

"I still am at a loss to understand you," said the lady.

"I,—and here again his voice faltered,—"I—my object in calling—my only fear is offending by taking so great a liberty—my object in calling was merely to say, that if—if, and I feel I am taking a liberty in supposing the case—if there should be a necessity for your removing from this house—mine is, for as long a period as may suit your convenience, entirely at your service; it does not emulate this charming place in accommodation or attractions, but as you have honoured me by visiting it, you know its merits and —"

"My dear sir," said Mrs. Nobbatop.

"Let me conclude," said Towsey, "in order to prove to you that I have no personally interested feelings in this offer, and that Miss Grayson may be convinced that I have no unworthy motives, and, moreover, that none of our kind friends and acquaintances may have an opportunity of making their remarks. I propose to leave it entirely at your disposal,—that is to say, I

intend quitting home for Brighton for two or three months, and I hope, during my absence, you will find everything agreeable and comfortable at Blachford."

"Sir," said Mrs. Nobbatop, "what have we ever done to deserve such generous conduct on your part?"

"You have permitted me the pleasure of your acquaintance," said Towsey. "I have been constantly in the habit of receiving your hospitable attentions,—I have passed some of the happiest hours of my life under this roof. The offer I make is nothing. I should have felt no earthly difficulty in proposing it, had it not been for the consciousness of a more than implied feeling towards your niece, which, however, my sense and just valuation of my own qualities, joined to a conviction that her affections were otherwise engaged, have enabled me, if not to conquer altogether, at least to control. This it was made me nervous at first, but appreciating your kindness, and having, I hope, made you understand my real feelings, I am now able to press you to come to Blachford whenever it is most agreeable, and consider it your own until *I* give you 'notice to quit.'"

Mrs. Nobbatop was completely overcome by the plain simplicity and natural earnestness of Towsey's words and manner. She struggled with her feelings, which had been fearfully worked upon during the last eight-and-forty hours. Clasping her hands, and lifting her eyes to heaven, she said, or rather sobbed, for tears hindered her utterance,—"Thank God, we have at least one friend left!"

Towsey walked to one of the windows to hide his emotion.

"Come," said Mrs. Nobbatop, "come with me to our poor Maria;—let me tell her of your kindness—let me——"

"Not for the world," said Towsey. "It is the struggle of my life to conquer the unfortunate affection I once suffered myself to encourage. My object, therefore, is *not* to see her, especially under our present circumstances. I fear she is as dear to me as ever; but I know my fate—I know my duty. It is in pure and sincere friendship I have paid you this visit. We must leave love to happier men; and so, my dear madam, what I shall do is this:—send over my man to receive your orders. To-morrow I start for Brighton. Do whatever you please. Whenever it is convenient or desirable for you to go to Blachford, go;—consider me present. I hope my housekeeper will treat you well, and that my excellent friend Nobbatop will find, if not such very good wine in the cellar as I have tasted here, my butler will set, at least, the best I have before him."

"But," said Mrs. Nobbatop, taking him by the hand, "I can accept no such offer;—indeed, kindest of friends, I am unable to answer you. I know nothing of my poor husband's engagements, or what may happen; or——"

"I do," said Towsey; "I know that if nothing else comes out of the fire, his honour will, purified by the process; but I know that some temporary inconveniences must inevitably occur. Therefore, give my regards and respects to him, and press him to do what I ask. I have no relations—no cares—no debts—no responsibilities;—what I suggest to you is therefore to be considered, as I have just said, only a mark of friendship, esteem, and gratitude."

"And you will not ask poor Maria how she is?" said Mrs. Nobbatop.

"No," said the excellent man with the unromantic name, "I dare not; it is incompatible with what I consider just and right;—present my compliments to her, and"—here again his voice faltered, and, passing his hand almost convulsively across his lips, he repeated—"I will send my man over to you tomorrow to take your commands."

"But indeed," said Mrs. Nobbatop, "till my husband has authorized me to accept your kindness——"

"He *will* accept it," said Towsey, "as why should he not?—and if he do not, threaten him with my anger, and tell him that he is no friend of mine."

After some more parleying, Mr. Towsey shook hands affectionately with the old lady and departed, leaving her quite overcome by his generosity. Not a moment did she lose, as may be supposed, in hurrying to Maria Grayson, and imparting to her the whole of the affair.

The disinterested generosity of his conduct, the delicacy yet clearness with which he had distinguished his affection for *her* from his friendship for the family, had their effect upon the noble-hearted girl. And she began to recollect the various good traits in his character which she had noticed during their acquaintance, qualified, as they always had been, by the thoughts of his exceedingly unpicturesque person and remarkably uneuphonic name, and to contrast them with the various agreeable sallies of Mr. Peregrine Bunce, which, though very fascinating, and doing great credit to his head, afforded little, if any, evidence of the goodness of his heart.

"Isn't it uncommonly kind?" said Mrs. Nobbatop.

"Indeed it *is*, aunt," said Maria; "and if I could separate

it from any feeling towards us not stronger than friendship,  
I—”

“ Well,” interrupted the aunt, “ but I have not told you all—he does not mean to remain in the house—gives it all up—”

“ It *is* generous,” said Maria; and a host of recollections flashing into her mind, of his constant devotion to her, and her equally constant scorn and neglect of him,—“ it is noble,”—and the tears flowed down her cheeks.

Some adepts in the art of lady-killing say, that if a man can make a serious woman laugh, he has carried his point to a great extent. To *us* it seems that he who can make the volatile, lively woman weep, has even yet a better chance. In thinking over poor Mr. Towsey’s conduct, which, be it always remembered, she could not believe quite disconnected from her own influence, she forgot his ungraceful figure, his unintellectual countenance, his plebeian name,—she saw him, thought of him, only as the sincere and generous friend of the family; such a one as she had hoped Mr. Peregrine Bunce might have been.

The question for consideration was, how Mr. Nobbatop might think as to the proposition. He, poor dear man, had no more idea that Towsey was in love with his niece, than he had that his niece was in love with Peregrine Bunce. Nothing, during his great career, either moved or excited him which was not somehow connected with his various schemes and innumerable speculations, and therefore Towsey’s offer would come to him unshaded, unalloyed, and untainted by any suspicion of a sinister design upon the girl, from any, the slightest imputations of which he had in his morning visit completely acquitted and exonerated himself. So that his wife, satisfied in her own mind of Towsey’s honour and propriety, did not consider it necessary to preface her account of his proceedings with any reference to his admitted and self-avowed predilection for her niece.

“ It *is* very kind of him,” said the bankrupt merchant, “ and his attentions are most seasonable; for at the moment, so sudden has been the blow, that I really do not know how I should have been able to place you so comfortably—”

“ But, sir,” said Maria, “ you know I have a mode of—”

“ Be quiet, my dear child,” said Nobbatop, “ never mind your mode of doing things; although you are arrived at what are called years of discretion, you are, as far as the world is concerned, a child; so, be patient and quiet. The Screechers have shown themselves not quite as I expected. I believe—I don’t know—but from what I can gather, it seems pretty certain, that

the marriage between George and Miss Screecher will not take place: so he tells me, judging from letters he received this morning. If it is so, it shows how much of affection there was in the attachment."

The words rang through Maria's ears—it was a parallel case to that of Peregrine.

"For my own part," continued Nobbatop, "ruined as I am—probably without a chance of redemption—I would sooner George should sweep the crossings of the streets, than accept the trumpery fortune which the girl can bring him, under the circumstances. Our position is one in which real feeling and real friendship are tested; and I hope he will act upon the principle which I have advocated."

Again the words thrilled through Maria's ears. What was this exclamation of her uncle's but praise—indirect, to be sure—of his worthy and considerate friend, Mr. Towsey? She could not help admitting the justice of what Mr. Nobbatop said, and murmured almost audibly, "What a pity he is *such* a man, and with *such* a name!"

And what a pity, the reader may exclaim, that Maria should suffer such considerations to qualify the esteem and regard which such disinterested conduct demanded.

Nobbatop, although anxious to conceal the extent of his misfortunes from his fond family, was fully aware of the value of his neighbour's prompt offer, which, it is therefore needless to say, he determined first gratefully to acknowledge, and then thankfully accept. It seemed a sort of neutral ground, upon which, for some time at least, those who were nearest and dearest to him would be out of the range of fire, and where, without a sudden transition to some exceedingly confined residence, they might be removed from the scene of spoliation which poor Slambury was legally destined to become in a few more days.

But Nobbatop even then—and when he despatched his letter to Mr. Towsey—was not aware, nor did his provident wife even comprehend, the extent of their neighbour's offer. It is true he had hinted at his intentions, but she had not understood his meaning. Not only was the house to be at their service during the unsettled period of their migration, but the establishment as it existed. He had said as much; but until his answer to Nobbatop's letter arrived, it had not been made clear to the family that they were to consider themselves his visitors in the most liberal and extensive acceptance of the word, he absenting himself merely to leave them more at their ease.

When Maria heard this letter read, her lips trembled, and tears filled her eyes. This conduct was so splendidly disinterested. And yet she could not blind herself to the truth, that it was for *her* sake it had been adopted. She made an effort to speak collectedly, in vain—she struggled. Her aunt saw her emotions.

“What, are you ill, Maria?” said she.

“No, no,” said the agitated girl, “this man’s generosity is above praise. Why should he leave his house to make way for us!—if we *are* to be his visitors, why should he not remain? *I* cannot say this; but surely you may. Such a heart and disposition should be treasured and worshipped. I am not blind, nor insensible. Aunt, I know why he proposes abandoning his home while we are to occupy it. He thinks—he feels, that I shall consider the invitation as given for *my* sake, and for the sake of securing my society, with which—I do not speak vainly—he has told me, he is pleased and gratified. I will answer for his being superior to any such view or motive. He has proved himself so. Why should he leave his home? If we *are* to be his visitors, why should we be left without our host; entreat him to stay.”

“You are an extraordinary girl, Maria,” said her uncle, “but your feelings here are right, just, and proper.”

“I only emulate *his*,” said Maria; “write, then, and beg him to remain and receive us.”

“Maria,” said Nobbatop, looking at her as if astonished at the energy of her manner, “will *you* write in our name?”

Maria, after the pause of a minute, during which she appeared to be struggling with her feelings, said, in a firm and decided tone, striking the table emphatically with her hand, “Yes, uncle, if you wish it, I WILL.”

“But will it be right, Mr. N.?” said Mrs. Nobbatop.

“Leave her alone, my dear woman,” replied her husband; “the heart that can suggest such conduct will never go wrong.”

“No, aunt,” said Maria, “I should not have adopted this course without consideration. I have been taught a lesson within the last few days, from which I may benefit much, and which will never be eradicated from my mind. My motives are good, therefore my conduct cannot be ill. Dictate, my dear uncle, and I will write.”

“No, Maria,” said her uncle, “write by my direction, but supply the words yourself. Women are greater adepts in the

art of correspondence than men, except indeed in that style of correspondence to which my mind and labour have been for so many years, as it now turns out, most unprofitably devoted."

"I will do whatever you wish," said Maria. "Upon the question of his leaving his house at a season when his hospitalities are remarkable, I know I may speak; and, putting aside all other feelings, I am sure, besides being more agreeable and convenient to *him*, it would be more satisfactory, and I may say respectable, that we should be really his guests, in his presence, than his tenants in his absence."

"Write what you please," said Nobbatop, "and say I authorize and desire it."

Away went Maria to perform the task, to the fulfilment of which, in its highest degree, she was resolved.

"That girl," said her uncle to his wife, as she quitted the room, "that girl has a mind fit for an empress. God bless her, poor child; how different are her prospects now from what they were seven days ago! Settled not only comfortably, but, as I may say, in comparative affluence for a woman. All is lost!—and her fortune shares the fate of ours. At present I see no ray of light;—however, let us hope for the best."

"*I* always do," said the amiable lady of the house.

And what was Maria doing?—writing the following letter to Mr. —. Why *had* he such a name?—Mr. Towsey:—

"Slambury.

"DEAR SIR,—My uncle and aunt have desired me to say, that in their grateful acceptance of your kind offer of a temporary home at Blachford, they forgot to press upon you one point which is essential to their enjoyment of your friendly proposition.

"They consider that your quitting your house to make room for us is a sacrifice which they cannot permit you to make. Nor would they feel half so comfortable, half so happy, or half so much at their ease, while you were away, as they should be if you were present—I will scarcely, under our circumstances, say doing the honours, but affording the kindnesses of Blachford.

"I am directed to beg you, if you will fill the measure of your friendship and consideration, to remain at home—to receive us—since you have been so good as to make the offer,—as you would in our better days have done; and so I write, secreta-

rially ; but if my own humble request can have any effect upon you, I do not hesitate to entreat you to remain at Blachford, which would be to us a desert if deprived of the presence of its master, whose nobleness of generosity and disinterestedness of feeling have given us all the highest opinion of his heart and character.

“In the name of my uncle and aunt, and in my own,

“Believe me, Dear Sir,

“Yours faithfully and gratefully,

“MARIA GRAYSON.”

Maria showed this letter to her uncle, who read it, refolded it, kissed her cheek, and desired her to put it in an envelope, and send it directly.

Now, there are—for, in the constitution of the world and society, there are minds capable of such dirty imaginings—there are people who would think—or, think is hardly the word—surmise, or suspect, that Maria Grayson, finding her fortunes fallen, was glad to reconcile herself to a match with the rich man whom she before had ridiculed. They who ventured so to guess, or insinuate, knew her not. No, with a high spirit and strong feelings, the heartless conduct of the man to whom she had conceded so much, forcibly as it struck her at first, when it came to be so suddenly placed in juxtaposition with the unexpected liberality of his inferior rival, worked the miracle, and wrought the change. Maria, with all her pride and dignity, would, in the very next week after the fall of her uncle’s house, have applied all her accomplishments to the maintenance of their establishment, had it been necessary. Rely upon it, there are very few mercenary women in the world ; when they *are* mercenary, they are not the women to be spoken of, or written of. Woman, with all her power and influence over man, is the most patient, enduring, toiling, suffering being that ever was created. What words are there to be found in any language sufficiently strong or emphatic to express our obligations and gratitude to them ? Mark then—of such Maria Grayson was one.

Our poor bankrupt merchant was forced to return to London in the morning, not as heretofore welcomed into the city as the great director of all things to be done, and the great oracle of all that was to be suggested. He was to be examined, and questioned, and placed before a meeting of creditors, in company with his partners, of whom, let it be observed, Mr. Saxby Mumps was not one. He had been the adviser, counsellor, and

"friend," and to his exceedingly clever calculations and sapient suggestions the downfall of the great firm of Nobbatop, Snaggs, and Widdlebury was most unquestionably owing.

The result of eight hours' labour was not altogether satisfactory ; it appeared, after working like horses, and wading through all sorts of documents, that the affairs of the house stood thus :—

	£.	s.	d.
Liabilities .....	964,382	13	$4\frac{3}{4}$
Assets .....	471,219	6	$11\frac{1}{2}$
Doubtful .....	118,714	3	$8\frac{1}{4}$

Leaving upon the good and supposed recoverable debts, a deficit of 493,163*l.* 6*s.*  $5\frac{1}{4}$ *d.*, which might be further reduced, supposing the doubtful debts were paid, to 375,449*l.* 2*s.* 9*d.*; but that was the best to be made of it. The dividend, therefore, did not look promising ; although, as Saxby Mumps said when he heard of the wind-up,

"Good !—six in pound—do ;" and out he walked, pale, cold, and unmoved, as if he had had no share whatever in advising the enormous speculation under which his dear friend and pupil had fallen into utter and irretrievable ruin.

It should be observed, in this calculation of assets, the private estates of the partners had been included, and Slambury, with its furniture, "appurts, &c." had been set down at thirty thousand pounds. The chances were, it would not fetch so much ; but being doomed, poor Nobbatop, with tears in his eyes, naturally thought, with redoubled gratitude, of the handsome and liberal offer of his neighbour Mr. Towsley.

It may easily be imagined, that our poor merchant, almost sneered at by his cold-blooded adviser, came home that night not in very good spirits ; but it was beautiful to see, and highly honourable to the class of persons to whom the praise is due, how devotedly kind—nay, we should say more than kind—devotedly civil and attentive to him, were all his servants, of whose conduct we have before spoken, who were fully aware of the value of their tenure of office in the house where they had been so long and so liberally maintained and treated ; but such was his nature, such was his character, that the very pressure of his misfortune seemed to raise the affections of the subordinates by whom he was surrounded.

The next morning brought, of course, an answer to Maria's letter. Read it :—

“Blackford, — 18—.

“DEAR MISS GRAYSON,—Your letter, written by direction of your uncle and aunt, has given me much pleasure. I felt that by leaving this house at their disposal, I should best consult their convenience ; but, assured as I am, not only on their parts, but your own, that they would not object to my receiving them, as I should at any other period of our acquaintance, I shall most gladly abandon my journey to Brighton, and endeavour to render my humble home as agreeable to my friends as possible.

“Still, dear Miss Grayson, make your uncle and aunt understand, that they are not in the slightest degree to be interfered with in their arrangements, and that, although I shall have the greatest pleasure in acting host, at all seasonable and reasonable times, you are all of you to consider yourselves wholly independent of the very humble person who happens to be master of the house.

“With sincere regards to your uncle and aunt, and very best compliments to yourself,

‘Believe me, dear Miss Grayson,  
“Your faithful servant,  
“J. TOWSEY.’

The tone and language of this kind and sensible letter sufficiently proved—at least, so it appears to us—that Mr. Towsey understood Maria’s letter, as it also appears most probable she meant he should. One thing is certain, that she was not dissatisfied with it, but, on the contrary, all selfishness apart, felt gratified by his determination of remaining at Blackford, because she was assured that the arrangement would more conduce to the comfort of her uncle and aunt, and relieve them of a restraint which must be inseparable from the gratuitous occupation of a friend’s house in his absence.

But Maria was destined to receive another agreeable letter on the same day, and one which really made her heart glad, not only for the news it contained, but because it exhibited human nature in a more favourable light than that in which her uncle had viewed it the preceding evening, and because it announced the certainty of an event upon which the happiness or misery of her favourite cousin George depended. As we are showing letters, perhaps we may let that of Miss Harriet Screecher speak for itself :—

*“Splaydon, —, 184—.*

“MY DEAR MARIA,—It is impossible to describe to you the sufferings I have endured for the last three days, the dread and suspense in which I have lived, or rather existed, on account of our dear George. Knowing my father’s extreme punctuality in matters of business, and the proverbial prudence of all his mercantile transactions, I saw nothing but the wreck of all my hopes in the melancholy event which has occurred; and although he said nothing to me on the subject, and I dared not say anything to him, I felt assured that George and I were separated eternally.

“Poor dear George has written me two of the kindest letters that man could write; but I could trace his desponding spirit in every line—his certainty, equal with my own, that we were doomed to be parted for ever. Indeed, poor fellow, he mentions in one of his letters, or rather in a postscript, that he sees no chance for him but going to Australia, where some speculation—a word I have just now learned to hate—offers itself.

“Think then, my dear, dear Maria, of the joy which filled my heart this morning, when my kind father called me into his own room, and told me, that having so long sanctioned the addresses of George, and having consented to our marriage, he felt that he should be acting cruelly, and doing me and George the greatest injustice, if he now revoked his decision. It is impossible to describe to you what I felt at that moment. The announcement was so unexpected—the decision so unexpired for: how I expressed my gratitude I cannot even recollect; for all I know is, when I recovered from the shock, I found my dear tender mother bathing my temples, while my father held my hands clasped in his.

“When I was sufficiently recovered to listen to details, my father explained to me the arrangement which he proposes, and which, I am sure, you will think as kind, and generous, and honourable, as I myself consider it. Our dear George, from not having been in partnership with his father, is not personally involved in the insolvency of the firm; he, therefore, is free; and instead of fulfilling the intentions which we had formed when he should become a partner, which he was to have been upon our marriage, my father takes him as junior partner into his own house, leaving the fortune which was destined for me, in the business, and suggesting our residing, for some time to come, here and in town with him and mamma.

“This is too much joy, dear Maria. The habits of business for

which our dear George is so remarkable, and, as my father says, are so exemplary, will enable him to relieve his future *Papa-in-law* from a great share of the labour which, after a long life of successful toil, begins to tell upon his constitution, and I, dearest Maria, am made the happiest girl in the world.

"And won't you come to us, and stay with us, whenever dear aunt and uncle can spare you?—won't they come too? It is a bright prospect that opens to my imagination; and I hope that you will not be worse off; for if ever there was devotion in a lover, your swain Mr. Peregrine Bunce—I wish he had a more agreeably-sounding name—possesses it in a most eminent degree. I ask no questions, but I can give some answers. Papa says that his uncle is as rich as Croesus, and so devoted to his nephew, that he only waits his bidding to do all that is noble and generous towards his niece elect.

"If I write nonsense—or what I should *not* write—pray, pray forgive me. I am too happy—just at the moment too when all my anticipations were defeated, all my fondest expectations blighted. I believe George will come down with my father to-day; at least he told me before he went, that he would ask him to do so.

"Write me a line, dearest sister—for so I almost consider you. Accept all our affectionate regards, and present them to aunt and uncle. I leave you to detail my delightful news to dear Mr. Nobbatop, and entreat you to believe me, dearest Maria,

"Yours affectionately,

"HARRIET SCREECHER.

"We heard this morning that you were all going on a visit to little Towsey's—is it so?—Poor dear little man, how happy and proud he *will* be!"

Maria read this letter with infinite pleasure. It exhibited a noble generosity on the part of Mr. Screecher, and promised happiness to the fair writer, and to her cousin George. Of course she lost no moment in reading it to her aunt, omitting, however, two passages—one, that in which allusion was made to the devotion of Mr. Peregrine Bunce—and the other, that in which Mr. Towsey was spoken of slightlying, and in a tone of ridicule. Nothing could—out of severe misfortune—have turned out better, than things seemed to have hitherto done. Before the end of the week, the Nobbatops were safely lodged at Blackford, and there were visited by the Screechers, while the attentions of the worthy

host were exactly of the character which marks high breeding. Everybody under his roof was left perfectly independent, until the daily meeting at the dinner table, and during the domestication of the week which followed, a more intimate knowledge of his temper and character, and the assurance of his generosity of heart and kindness of disposition, had rendered him in Maria's eyes an object, to say the least of it, of esteem.

Sir Richard Steele tells us, that "handsome people are usually so fantastically pleased with themselves, that if they do not kill at first sight (as the phrase is), a second interview disarms them of all their power."—Taking the reverse of this, and moreover bearing in mind the often quoted axiom of Sheridan, the reader may fancy that the constant association of Maria with Towsey, the daily evidence afforded of his kindness and consideration towards his friends, and his benevolence and charity towards his poor neighbours, began to work a wonderful alteration in her opinion of him. To be sure his nose was not aquiline—his eyes were not sparkling black—his dark locks did not cluster over a high white forehead, and his little wisps of whiskers were not particularly graceful. His figure was as unlike that of the Apollo, or the Antinous, as may be imagined. He was what would be familiarly and colloquially called a "potty man;"—but what should we care for the material, or shape, or workmanship of the casket that contains such an inestimable jewel as an honest heart?

While all these arrangements were in progress, and while the sun still seemed to shine upon the ruins of the fortunes of the Nobbatops, their friend Mr. Peregrine Bunce was still in London—rather at fault as to his next exploit, but still inestimably dear to his uncle, who thought him not only sharp and clever, but—which he valued more—good.

"I'll tell you what," said Noll, "you have behaved in this last business well—unwilling to drag a poor girl into uncertainty and difficulty; besides, by your own account, I don't think she would have suited you, eh?"

"I really think not, sir," said Peregrine; "as I have before said, she is somewhat too lively in her manner, and, I should say, must be extravagant in her habits. You know *my* taste—the quiet, unpresuming—eh?"

"Your uncle's fancy to a tittle," said Noll; "that's my fancy, as I said the other day, or rather was—for—ha! ha! ha!—it is rather gone by with *me*. My pleasure now is to see the enjoyment of others; and I *do* hope, Perry—to be sure, you have

been somehow unfortunate—but I *do* hope to see you settled before I go."

" Everything seems to show," said Peregrine, " that Nobbatop's conduct, as well as that of his partners, has been highly honourable. I hear the place, Slisbury, is to be dismantled, and all the furniture, and wines, and pictures, and all that sort of thing, sold—a great portion of the furniture on the spot—now, at this time of the year, I should think things would not fetch much, and there are two or three *objets*, as the French say, which I think, my dear uncle, would suit you. The billiard-table is a good one, and you want a billiard-table; and there are two cabinets, which Miss Grayson used to call hers—poor girl—exceedingly handsome. I have no doubt they will go cheap;—and he has got a pony, the best trotter I ever crossed, which I always used to ride as a special favour. I think we might nab that for next to nothing."

" Gad," said Noll, " I see you have an eye to everything."

" And," continued Peregrine, " their favourite dinner-service is just the thing for you. You were going last year to buy one at Copeland's. You will get this for half the money. Only we must send some agent down, so that it may seem that no gentleman is bidding."—(*Gentleman!*)—" I'll take care and get a catalogue and mark the lots—for I know them well enough to know what you would like."

On the morning of the day succeeding this characteristic dialogue with his uncle, Mr. Peregrine Bunce, in crossing Lincoln's Inn Fields, happened suddenly to encounter Mr. George Nobbatop. Their meeting was accidental, but their greeting was cordial. George had been too much engaged in business to have thought of, or, if he had thought of, to have comprehended, the exact state of affairs between Peregrine and his cousin Maria.

As inquiries are cheap commodities, and a question of ordinary civility binds a man to nothing serious, Mr. Peregrine Bunce asked warmly and enthusiastically after Mr. and Mrs. Nobbatop, and Miss Grayson; in reply to which he received for answer, the information that they had left Slisbury, and had gone on a visit to Mr. Towsey's, at Blachford. Peregrine affectionately pressed the hand of Mr. George Nobbatop, and requested him to present his kindest compliments and regards to the family, all of which Mr. George Nobbatop promised to do.—And so *they* parted.

The break-up, or rather the break-down, of such an establish-

ment as that of Messrs. Nobbatop, Snaggs, and Widdlebury, naturally caused, not only much confusion in the mercantile world, but much conversation in circles not immediately connected with the failure, and scarcely a day passed in which something did not come before the public, relating to what *was* to be, or what was *not* to be, done in the affair. However, as we know Peregrine had made up his mind—he had, to use a familiar, but very expressive phrase, “cut the connection,” and *that* too with his uncle’s full consent, obtained under the impression which he himself had made upon the old gentleman’s mind.—By so much the more mean and hypocritical was the warm reception which he gave George Nobbatop when he met him.

Peregrine Bunce was one of those half-and-half gentlemen who get their information as to what is going on in society from the newspapers. All the “we understands,” and “we have heards,” were imbibed by him as pure knowledge, and he pored over the list of “fashionable arrivals,” including that of “Mr. Henry Bosh, at the Catanpan Hotel,” or the departure of “Lady Slobberly from the Dodberry,” with the deepest possible interest. However, in plodding over the *Morning Post*, which, besides all the chit-chat of the town, gives the parliamentary debates and law proceedings better than any paper going, about three days after his encounter with George Nobbatop, he found a report of a short case in the Court of Bankruptcy. Knowing nothing of law, and knowing nothing of the object of this particular matter, he merely read it because the peculiarity of the name of the party caught his eye. The question raised was one as to the liability of our poor Maria Grayson’s fortune to the sweeping operation of the insolvency of her uncle—it was decided in her favour—her fortune was out of the reach of all claimants; and so honourably, in her favour, as regarded Nobbatop himself, that the creditors, if they *could*, would not have touched a shilling of it.

Peregrine read the decision—read Maria Grayson’s name all printed and published at full length, together with the announcement of her possession of the capital sum of thirty-one thousand five hundred pounds (instead of the stated forty thousand) thereunto annexed, and of her legal and actual vested interest in it.

Then—and at that moment—did the love which had not been quite extinguished by the damp of Nobbatop’s distress, begin to crackle, and almost blaze again. “I have won her,” said Peregrine—“she loves me.—I have retired because I had not the

means to support her as she ought to be supported. She will appreciate those feelings; and I will lose not a moment in flying to her—sweet innocent! What a blessing to such a creature must this decision be; and how happy shall *I* be, if I am not too late, the first to announce this happy result."

Peregrine was again on the alert. Tim was ordered to have everything ready for a start; and as his master knew from George that the family was domesticated at "Spooney Towsey's," he was perfectly aware of the road he had to take.

He did take the road, and arrived at Blachford in due time. Mrs. Nobbatop, for whom he first inquired, received him with all her usual courtesy, and acknowledged his kindness in coming to ask after them. She knew that Maria had received him favourably. She had also heard her censure and even denounce him; but she only looked at him as the agreeable visitor to Slambury, and thought he would be an acquisition to their little party; and, moreover, as the quarrels of lovers are but the renewals of love, there was, as she fancied, every probability that Maria and he would be friends again.—Whether with or without the performance of a certain process, which proverbially forms part of the ceremony of such reconciliations, it is not for us to surmise.

Mrs. Nobbatop, dear soul, when she so kindly received the hypocritical, sneaking Peregrine, was not aware of what had taken place that morning before his arrival at Blachford.

On that morning Mr. Towsey had heard the decision in favour of Maria and her fortune. Details of love scenes, since the world has gotten beyond the mawkishness of mock solemnity, are dull and tiresome; and even if they be not, to the lovers of sentimentality, such a scene as occurred between Mr. Towsey and Miss Grayson would afford no kind of gratification.

After breakfast, the homely host and the fair visitor were left alone. In his manner, at the best of times shy and embarrassed, there was something at the moment which she remarked as peculiarly strange, and, accordingly, she made some commonplace observation, and was leaving the room.

"Miss Grayson," said the master of the house, "will you permit me to say a few words to you?"

"Of course," said Maria, "why should I not?"

"I feel," said he, "that I am violating a rule which I laid down for my conduct when you first honoured me with your company here. I admitted to your aunt the strength of my feelings towards you, and I assured her that that strength of

feeling should never exhibit itself during your stay, and, in order to avoid the possibility of annoying you, I suggested my leaving the house. Forgive me—pray forgive me—when I say that your kind letter—to me the most valuable letter I ever received—gave me hopes, that after a longer acquaintance, you might be induced to think better of me than you had previously done."

"Indeed," said Maria, "you quite mistake my feelings. Nobody do I more esteem and regard than yourself; and each succeeding day that I am here, affords new proofs of your kindness and liberality."

"Maria," said he, looking—as sincere love will make even a plain man look—inspired, "Maria, if I may so call you, our letters to-day announce the blessed—for so it is to me—decision, that your fortune is secured to you."

Maria fixed her dark penetrating eyes on his countenance with something like wonderment at this allusion.

"You are therefore safe from the ruin of your house," continued he, "and mistress of an independent property."

Maria turned pale—her lips quivered—and she asked herself, "Have I again been deceived?—are all men mercenary alike?"

"That," said her companion, "to me is everything. Thank heaven! *my* fortune is ample—my income far beyond my expenditure. Yes, Maria Grayson, I am rich. On my knees I implore you to accept my heart, which has so long been devoted to you, and afford me, besides the blessing of calling you my own, the happiness of appropriating the whole of your income to the use of your excellent uncle and aunt, so long as they live. I want none of it; and if—if I am so fortunate, with a perfect sense of all my personal demerits, to obtain your sanction to this hope of my heart, I—I —"

Maria Grayson, as the tears streamed from her eyes, faltered out, "I was *not* deceived in you." She could say no more;—her head sank upon his shoulder—he pressed her to his heart. He deserved the prize he had gained.

Of the particulars of this brief scene, and of its necessary results, Mrs. Nobbatop was in perfect ignorance when our friend Peregrine made his appearance.

"Charming place," said Peregrine to the old lady, "not quite up to Slambury, but very pretty.—Maria quite well?—I suppose little Towsey is at home, eh?"

"We will ring, and see where they are," said Mrs. Nobbatop. "Mr. Towsey has got two or three friends down here to-day;

so if he should ask you to stop, you will find it livelier than usual."

When the servant was despatched to Maria, to announce Mr. Peregrine Bunce's visit, her first resolution was not to see him; but Mr. Towsey, whose confidence had naturally grown with success, entreated her to accompany him to the drawing-room, to see this splendid specimen of humanity, whose appearance there, Maria, as well as Towsey, instantly and properly attributed to the decision as to the young lady's fortune.

Mrs. Nobbatop, whose mind was, as we know, the purest and most unsophisticated imaginable, could not at all account for the exceedingly warm and rather facetious manner in which her niece and Towsey treated Peregrine. They affected to be so delighted to see him, wondered where he had been so long, and inquired after his uncle with a sort of preternatural affection. Peregrine was too quick not to perceive that he had decidedly "missed his tip," and that, although the aunt was still as seriously kind as ever, the niece and her companion were acting upon quite another plan. He began to get proportionably fidgety, and made some sign of going.

"Oh," said Mrs. Nobbatop, "you won't go till you have had some luncheon? To be sure, I am taking a great liberty in your house, Mr. Towsey; but —"

"Don't mention it, my dear Mrs. Nobbatop," said Towsey, "we shall be too happy. I am only waiting for the return of our friends from their walk. These new-married people are so loving."

"Talking of your uncle, Mr. Bunce," said Maria, "when are we likely to see *him*?"

"Why," said Peregrine, quite aware that he was somehow found out, "I told you I thought it not very likely he would be prevailed upon to leave London just at this season of the year."

"Is there any news in town?" said Towsey, with an air, and in a tone, which a person so quick as Peregrine could not fail to understand and appreciate.

"Not that I have heard," said Peregrine, who knew too well the expression of Maria's bright eyes, to be at all comfortable, when he saw a certain exchange of looks between her and his host.

"I thought," said Towsey, "you might have heard something of the law reports of yesterday."

"No," said Peregrine, feeling himself burning with blushes, while his hands and feet were icy cold.—"No."

"I hope," said Miss Grayson, "you got your dressing-case and umbrella safe from Slisbury, Mr. Bunce."

This did not improve Peregrine's position. He merely stammered out something like an acknowledgment of her attention.

"Well," said Towsey, "where are my honeymooners? we must get them in. Mrs. Nobbatop, luncheon-time is past."

"Ah!" said Mrs. Nobbatop, turning to Peregrine, not even yet alive to the brutality—for that is the only suitable word—of his conduct, "and *you* enjoy luncheon *so*."

"I assure you," said Peregrine, "I merely came over just to \_\_\_\_."

At this moment the sound of a key-bugle, tuning up "Polly put the kettle on," or some such classical melody, struck upon Peregrine's ears: it was annihilation—too surely did he recognize the sound.

"What is that music?" said Mrs. Nobbatop.

"It is the way my friend M'Larrup has of announcing his approach to the house," said Towsey; "so now we may get to our refreshment; he and his charming wife will be here directly."

"Why," said Peregrine, getting up hastily, and gathering together his hat, gloves, and whip, "I never eat luncheon, and besides, I must get back. I only rode down to pay my respects, and \_\_\_\_."

Tootle tootle went the key-bugle, close to the windows.

"Well, then," said Maria, rising from the sofa, with a coolness of manner which it required a powerful struggle to assume and maintain, "we will not detain you any longer. I understand that Captain and Mrs. M'Larrup *were* friends of yours. Perhaps you have no particular desire now to meet them. That desire on *your* part towards *them* is precisely equal, sir, to *my* desire as regards *yourself*. Aunt, ring the bell for Mr. Bunce's horses."

How Mr. Peregrine Bunce, under such circumstances, effected his retreat, history does not tell; but certain it is, that as he took his final departure, the key-bugle of Captain M'Larrup *did* sound forth "Stole away," in a tone which, however brilliant in itself, rang most discordantly in the defeated pretender's ears. His abdication was followed by a loud laugh, of which, it is to be hoped, he was unconscious; and the cause of which, even then, the amiable, good Mrs. Nobbatop did not quite comprehend. A more signal defeat never fell upon a meaner or more desppicable hero.

## CHAPTER XIX.

NEVER did huntsman sound a “*mort*” more effective than the last blast of M‘Larrup’s bugle, as it rang in the ears of Mr. Peregrine Bunce. That he should have been found out by Maria, and consequently *chasséed*; that he should have been so justly defeated; these were events, important as they unquestionably were to his views and prospects, that were light in the catalogue of his miseries, compared with the astounding and overwhelming fact, that the M‘Larrups were actually in at the death.

It was a combination of miseries—a regular concatenation; and never did man mount a horse (so ordered, too, as his had been) with spirits more requiring that “stirrup-cup,” of which so much has been said or sung, than Peregrine Bunce.

A halt at Ditton was his only chance—really and truly he had not the power, the animal power, of “holding on;”—his knees trembled—his hands shook—and while he tried to retain his seat and the bridle, the recollections that crowded into his mind nearly incapacitated him from doing either. His first impulse was to strike into a gallop—that was beyond him; a canter was equally disagreeable; a trot was even worse; and the exiled, repudiated, degraded, and exposed schemer, pulled up, and, in a walk, which, however much it might conduce to his safety, certainly did not qualify his sickness, he proceeded to “bait” at the Swan—once the scene of all his hopes—or, as the cockneys say, “high aspirations,” himself looking even more like a goose than the bird on the signboard.

Much as Peregrine Bunce thought he knew of the world—and he did know a good deal—Peregrine was not altogether prepared for that, which to a man who mixes much in general society is nothing extraordinary, although it may for a moment startle—we mean the almost certainty of finding, wherever he goes, or however frequently he changes his circle, some link, some clue, some history to connect it with some other in which he has remotely or recently moved before. That M‘Larrup should be an acquaintance of Towsey’s was perfectly natural, more especially as in the outset of his career the kind and worthy Towsey had

been a soldier. He had entered the army full of zeal and ambition, but having, by virtue of the length of his father's purse, selected a crack cavalry regiment as the arena for his military display, the combined facts that his name was

“Unpleasing to the lancers' ear,”

and that no ingenuity of the regimental riding-master ever could effect the much-desired object of keeping the gallant cornet on his horse, after he had, with inconceivable difficulty, mounted it, induced him to avail himself of the circumstance of his respectable father's death, to supersede the necessity of being “gotten rid of,” by selling out, as he had bought in, and beating his unfleshed sword into a ploughshare, becoming, as we know him to be, a generous, noble-hearted private gentleman.

It did so occur, that Captain M'Larrup happened to be, not of the same regiment with Towsey, but to have been quartered in the same city with him ; and perceiving that Towsey's *gaucheries*, coupled with his exceedingly good temper, placed him in a most awkward position with the officers of his own crack corps, had determined, in all the warmth of Hibernian generosity, to be his friend, not only in the worldly and philosophical acceptation of the word, but as it is used with reference to the indispensable meetings of men of honour (especially military men), in which capacity, it appeared to the gallant captain, that in spite of the urbanity and endurance of Cornet Towsey, his services would probably be some fine morning required. M'Larrup saw enough of Towsey to know that the spirit was not wanting to maintain his character, although his mind was so generous and his temper so admirable, that he was neither ready nor willing to look at the conduct of his high, if not well-bred companions in arms, in a serious point of view ; conscious that he himself was incapable of wounding the feelings of his associates, or, if he had any object to gain in coming to open war with them, equally incapable of carrying that object, by ironical playfulness, or hypocritical civility, which were the weapons adopted by those who, in the present instance, wished to worry our poor cornet out of the corps.

M'Larrup believed, and justly too, that his young and persecuted friend would, whenever it was necessary, vindicate the honour of the cloth he had chosen to assume. He thought with (although perhaps the gallant bugler had never heard of) Beaumont and Fletcher, who say—

"An honest soul is like a ship at sea,  
That sleeps at anchor upon th' occasion's calm,  
But when it rages, and the wind blows high,  
She cuts her way with skill and majesty."

And so it proved ; for, as he had anticipated, the run against poor Tow, as they called him, became so marked, that just previous to his father's death, and his quitting the service, he felt it his duty not only to follow M'Larrup's advice, but avail himself of his attentions, in a meeting with one of the handsomest and most aspiring heroes of the regiment ; the result of which was the out-knocking of four of the whitest teeth that had ever shown themselves to fine ladies, together with the lodgment of the ball that had so efficiently superseded Spence, in the dexter shoulder of his distinguished opponent. What other proceedings might have taken place, had our cornet remained where he was, and his father had longer lived, we know not ; all we *do* know is, that as Towsey joined the crack regiment an honourable man, and a man of honour, so he left it.

The feelings and ruminations of Peregrine Bunce, when he found himself "alone in his glory," at Ditton, are not to be described. The civility of the attentive host and hostess was gall and wormwood to him ; any piscatorial allusion to the prospect of barbel-sport next season, drove him to wish almost that his assiduous landlord might never hear his own bar-bell ring again ; he paced the small apartment in which he was located, compared his position and views with those by which he had been cheered and encouraged when he last was there, wholly undetermined what next to do.

Rapidity of motion was his ordinary remedy for all his ills ; but at this juncture, or rather disjuncture of affairs, he was more than usually puzzled, inasmuch as, having prevailed upon his uncle to remain in London during the usual season of his rural festivities, he felt exceedingly unwilling to leave him there, without his company, inasmuch as he was, as we know, living in constant apprehension of the prevalence of some counter-influence over the old gentleman's mind, or rather his will. To stay in town was not a desirable proceeding for Peregrine, yet the "main chance" was always to be looked to.

Could he contrive to persuade Uncle Noll to take a middle course—neither to stay in London, nor go to Twigglesford ? If he could manage this, he fancied he could make a hit. The watering-places which, in Noll's youth, were visited in summer, were now the resort of company in winter ; and, judging from

the old gentleman's candid and unconcealed anxiety to stay and see more of Brighton, when they were there upon the last failing enterprise together, Peregrine entertained some hopes of getting him to undertake a constitutional trip to the tea-kettle in the valley, Bath, or Leamington, or Cheltenham, where, away from the vicinities which began to be, as the saying goes, "rather too hot to hold him," he might still pursue his vocation, having with him his opulent relation, safe and snug, while the exhibition of his care and attention to the old gentleman might inspire confidence, and excite respect and admiration in the visitors, against whom, if he found anything to suit (or rather to match), he might feel inclined to play off his amatory battery.

The luncheon which was put down for him was scarcely touched ; but, upon the principle of

"Keeping spirits up by pouring spirits down,"

more than one or two draughts of mahogany brandy-and-water were called into play by our vanquished hero. It required at least those to varnish up his imagination, so far as to awaken in it some of the visions of the future, upon the realization of which he could hope to exist. All that in the outset, and at the moment, he bargained for, being a change of scene—a decided change of scene—a far remove from his present, or rather late field of action ; *the question was, how, taking all the precautions which we have just seen he considered so essential to his benefit, he was to work his plans into a state of practicability.*

It was just as Peregrine had consoled himself into a more pleasing prospect for the future than had presented itself to his mind before his imbibition of the brandy-and-water, that "mine host" made his appearance in the room. He had taken a liking to Peregrine, as it was natural he should do, inasmuch as Peregrine was exceedingly plausible and pleasant, especially when, feeling or fancying his implied superiority, he mixed condescension with his conversation and conviviality, and patronized while he pleased his associates ; thus enjoying the highest gratification of the lowest minds, that of being what is vulgarly called "cock of the company ;" a propensity which must invariably degrade the said "cock," let his position in society be what it may, inasmuch as, to secure his much envied pre-eminence, he must invariably associate with his inferiors.

Lord Chesterfield says, "Choose the company of your superiors whenever you can have it,—that is the right and true pride.

The mistaken and silly pride is to primer among inferiors ;”—and let this be observed, that whenever you find one of these men, who love to “primer over inferiors,” in good society, where he is scarcely known and rarely recognized, you will always see in him the most subservient deference to rank and quality, which probably has its origin in the feelings of gratification derivable to himself from the adulation of the groundlings over whom he happens, at other times, to have the privilege of presiding.

No matter just now ;—in came “mine host,” smiling and rubbing his hands, as if he were perfectly sure that what he was going to say, and the announcement he was about to make, would gladden the heart of our friend Peregrine Bunce in a very extraordinary degree, and said, in that sort of smirking manner which conveys an idea that the smirker knows more than he means to say—

“I believe, sir, you knew Mrs. Atkins ?”

If “mine host” had at the moment stabbed his guest to the heart, he would have done him not a much greater injury.

“Mrs. who ?” said Peregrine, pretending not to understand the question, in order to gain time for a reply ; as crafty politicians often affect deafness, so that if anything sharp or unpleasant happen to be said, they may seem not to hear it, and if, choosing to hear it, and it may be something puzzling, they may, by begging that the question may be repeated, gain time to answer it.

“Atkins, sir,” said the Swan,—“she has been staying here, sir, for a day or two, and mentioned your name,—and Mr. Hobsnob, her solicitor, was here too,—and so, I ——”

“Well,” said Peregrine, “and what of her ?”

“I hope, sir,” said the Swan, “we are likely to have her for a neighbour. I hear—only I don’t *know*—that she is about to take Diana Lodge—the best establishment in this neighbourhood for the reception of young ladies.”

“What,” said Peregrine, “do you mean ?—a seminary—a —?”

“No, pardon me, sir,” said the Swan, “seminary means a young gentlemen’s academy.—Establishment, I believe, is the proper term for the female school. It has been carried on for some years very successfully, by the two Miss Dollyrags. All nice and neat, sir—white dimity curtains—washhand-stands in the sleeping-rooms—the young ladies brought up economically —make their own beds—excellent exercise—good meat, and

plenty of pudden, as I know, and all for twenty-five pounds per annum."

"But is Mrs. Atkins in a treaty for this establishment, as you call it?" said Peregrine.

"I think so," said the Swan; "I believe I have brought it about—hoped to please *you*—made an arrangement which, I trust, will be satisfactory;—coming in cheap, and I hope to put her quite easy upon the blood-for-blood system."

"The what system?" said Peregrine, horrified at the sound of the words.

"Don't you understand, sir?" said "mine host,"—"I think I can secure her the daughters of my butcher, my baker, my butter-and-cheeseman, and my linendraper; but then, don't you perceive, no money passes between them—all give and take. The charges for teaching Juliana and Almeria Killbull, Italian, music, French, dancing, geology, knitting, knotting, astronomy, Spanish, Greek, mathematics, and the tambourine, not to speak of dancing and the use of the globes, will all be taken out in shoulders of mutton, thin flanks, legs of veal, shins of beef, liver and suet, and all the other essentials for the kitchen of the establishment; while Seraphina Duff will be finished up to perfection for a paternal expenditure of quarterns, half-quarterns, French rolls, flour, and bakings; and the completion of the pretty Miss Gingham's education, up to the highest pitch, upon the modern system, will be achieved by a similar outlay of calico sheets and huckaback towels."

"And what," said Peregrine, "what, might I ask, induced you to interest yourself so much about Mrs. Atkins?"

"Why, sir," said the Swan, smiling, "she is rather a nice person herself, and having, as I have just said, heard from her and the gentleman who was staying here with her, that she was a friend of yours, and anxious to establish herself in the scholastic line, I ——"

"Oh," said Peregrine, "I quite appreciate your good feeling, but—but ——"

And hereabouts Peregrine felt exceedingly anxious to ask a question, which he felt that he could not put directly, but which he would, even under the pressure of his present misfortunes, have much liked to hear solved—knowing the perfect propriety of the house, it was clear that the worthy landlord himself would have been the very last person in the world to have given him a satisfactory answer. So he contented himself with thanking him for the interest he had taken in the young

lady, wishing him (as the novelists say), mentally, at old Nick, and resolving to have one more glass of cold brandy-and-water, with a view of obtaining from some minor branch of the establishment a little information of which he was exceedingly anxious to become master.

What success attended the further inquiries of Mr. Peregrine Bunce, with regard to the particular point upon which he seemed so anxious to be enlightened, it is neither delicate for us to ask, nor, at least in the present stage of our history, necessary for us to know. When he took his departure, he certainly mounted his horse much more manfully than he had at Blachford, and cantered away in a manner which, to those who did not know what was passing through his brain, would have appeared the style of a gentleman taking an airing, quite at his ease.

When the illustrious Green, the aéronaut, rises in that gigantic balloon, of his own creation, and now, as we are told, in his own possession, he and that noble vehicle of his are the objects which attract all eyes and rivet all beholders. No doubt, Green himself has registered all the voyages he has so successfully made, and, as far as he himself is concerned, one might, if he pleased, deduce therefrom a history of his unearthly proceedings. But Green has, during these progresses, only passed over countries, and counties, and cities, and towns, and villages; and the rapidity of his progress—not to speak of the somewhat inconvenient elevation—must have hindered him from collecting for the world any detailed accounts of the vast tracts of land and water which he has traversed at so exalted a pitch.

Peregrine Bunce was a sort of Green—neither in genius nor enterprise—but he was one of those erratic personages who enforce upon their biographers an apparent brevity and abruptness, which, in our case, nothing seems more likely to justify than an allusion to the daring traveller in the air. It may be thought careless or heartless to leave the reader to doubt or uncertainty as to the fate of the different families in whose homesteads Peregrine Bunce has, at various times, fixed his grapnel; but our object is to trace *him*, just as, with an anxious eye, we have watched Mr. Green. Therefore, if, in the course of our short narrative, only here and there incidentally turn up some reminiscences of those to whom he has behaved “so ungenteelly,” the omission of following out each of those families to the completion of their destinies, must rather be attributed to the impossibility of doing so, in so brief a book as this, than to any inattention on the part of the narrator.

Well, away again is Peregrine gone, and when he arrives in London, what is he to do?—"that's the question," and it is a question of greater importance, as regards Uncle Noll, than it might have been considered some time since; for, truth to be told, just at the very period at which Uncle Noll had determined—to oblige his nephew—to remain in London, the weekly disappearances—the hebdomadal visits to his relation in disgrace, if it *were* so—had ceased; and by so much the more did the old gentleman require the society of his nephew;—so far so good;—and this alteration in his habits, reported by Limpus (for a *consideration*) to Peregrine, put him more completely on the *qui vive*, the moment he got to town, as to the course he ought to pursue with regard to the old gentleman.

However, as we have already noticed, there is always in this world a compensation. Whatever might have been the obligation which seemed to bind Uncle Noll to make these mysterious visits to this disgraced relation, and which he so scrupulously and religiously maintained and observed, under all circumstances of wind and weather, and, as the old wives say, "what not," they were at an end,—thus far Peregrine's fears of a superior influence were quieted. But *then*, would it not be more necessary than ever, that he should be more, or, if he could, constantly, with his uncle? Yes; but then—then—then it seemed that the local attraction was gone. Uncle Noll had no tie to London; therefore would it be much easier to induce him to leave "the flaunting town," and go with his affectionate nephew to some distant watering-place, where—who knows?—something new might turn up? Thus the hope "that springs eternal in the human breast," brightened up Peregrine the moment he heard from Limpus that the old gentleman had not been absent from the "*Cabbage-stalk*" any one day or night for the last two weeks.

Peregrine had certainly noticed, that his uncle, although his spirits did not seem generally depressed, *had* worn black during the last fortnight;—this was exactly what might have been expected. The disgraceful relation, no doubt, was dead; but although, during his lifetime, circumstances might have justified Noll's public separation from him, the good, kind feeling of his heart could not be satisfied without mourning—even outwardly—to himself, the loss of one who, by his death, had expiated all his mortal crimes, at least so far as the judges of *this* world are concerned;—but which good Uncle Noll could not but personally feel.

Amongst other questions which were rolling about in Peregrine's mind, as he either trotted, or cantered, or galloped—for all the paces were selected at its pleasure by his favourite bay—one seemed most important, and that was, how he should treat the last affair at Blachford, and its very disagreeable termination, in describing it to the old gentleman. We feel that we ought to beg the reader's pardon for being so candid, when the character of a hero is at stake. Of course, truth would be the last choice of our enterprising Peregrine; and indeed, we must say, that, considering all things, it would have required no small degree of courage on his part to have been punctiliously veracious in this chapter of his history. Shakspeare says—

“Tell truth, and shame the devil ;”

but if the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, were to have been told by Peregrine now, the only devil to be ashamed would have been Peregrine himself.

Like other great men, Mr. P. Bunce having formed in his mind a sort of outline of the course which it would be wisest and most prudent to adopt with regard to Uncle Noll, left, as the most skilful artists do, to chance, to furnish him with all the incidental details; quite satisfied that in the end he should gain over the old gentleman, and soon be ready to “start again.”

“Well, Master Peregrine,” said Noll, as the dutiful nephew presented himself at the copiously stored breakfast-table of his respected and respectable relation, in the long room of the Tavistock, “here you are again—deuced glad to see you back, hey gad—haven’t taken your ‘matutinal meal,’ as Fleam has it—come to join me in my feed?”

Peregrine bowed assent, and sat down.

“Don’t you remember,” said Noll, “somebody telling a faithful servant of an old master, hey gad—‘Thomas, your master’s going, I think—he breaks fast.’—‘Yes,’ says Thomas, ‘sir, he breaks fast every morning,’ hey gad.—You see that’s the way the old story has it. Come, waiter—here—beef, ham, tea, eggs, fish, coffee, chocolate, and everything in the world.—And so, where were you yesterday?”

“Yesterday, sir,” said Peregrine, “I went to see poor dear Mrs. Nobbatop and Maria.”

“Dine there?” said Noll, filling his mouth at the same moment with the half of a muffin, as thick and as woolly as a

doormat, soaked in butter (which, in spite of the dexterity of the venerable practitioner, escaped from both corners of the mouth into which the matty mass had been received, or rather forced),—"eh?"

"No," said Peregrine, affecting to select a particular slice of toast from a plate near him.

"Wrong principle that," said Noll, "I'm all against that—as the old joke goes, 'dine where I lunch, sleep where I dine, and breakfast where I sleep,' hey gad."

"But I had no intention of either dining or sleeping when I went," said Peregrine.

"Ah, good fellow, good fellow," said Noll, "mere respect and affection; and how are they?—What do the assignees allow for Toppanob?—hey gad—great smash. How is the girl?"

"Quite well, sir," said Peregrine; "I didn't stay long; for the truth is, I met with some unexpected friends there,—M'Larrup just married to Miss Minton."

"Hey gad," said Noll, "that's odd—strange—curious coincidence;—not pleasant. Did she blab?—what?"

"I know nothing of that," said Peregrine; "they seemed very civil; at least I saw very little of them; only I thought it was more delicate on my part—and what I felt to be right, the principle upon which, at all sacrifices to myself, I am always determined to act—to leave Blachford as soon as I decently could."

"Ah, that's good," said Noll; "very proper—very good feeling, and good taste; and the M'Larrups—isn't it strange we never heard of the marriage, eh? Do they seem happy, and all that?"

"Yes, sir," said Peregrine; "I saw nothing in their conduct to excite any suspicion to the contrary. He was as eloquent as ever with his key-bugle."

"Key-bugle!" said Noll, looking exceedingly arch, and pausing, with a lump of sugar between the tongs, before he dropped it into his fishpond-like basin of Bohea,—"key-bugle, hey gad—'horns in the honeymoon,' as the old joke goes—what?"

Peregrine, at this period of the dialogue, was inspired with a most fervent hope that the topic, which it appeared to him his uncle had now exhausted, would be changed; and, as there was a momentary pause after the laugh which Peregrine got up for the occasion, he determined to do his best to divert the old gentleman's thoughts into some other channel.

"What have you made up your mind to do, my dear

sir?" said Peregrine, with an air of solicitude most admirably managed.

"Do," said Noll, "do—about what?"

"Remaining in town," said the devoted nephew, "or going elsewhere."

"Why," said Bunce the elder, "if you had asked me that question a week ago, I should have told you that I meant to remain here till the end of January; but," added he, and here the old gentleman's voice faltered, "something has occurred—recently occurred—which loosens the tie that held me to London; and—I—declare, I don't much care what I do; in fact, Perry, you may command me."

The tone and manner of his uncle, taken in conjunction with the suit of sables before noticed, convinced Peregrine that he was right in his conjecture, and that death had terminated the course of attentions and kindness which, under all circumstances, the worthy Noll had considered it his duty to bestow upon his near, and yet to *him*, dear relation; but only conceive the delight of the wily nephew, at finding that this melancholy catastrophe, about which he never meant to inquire further, had literally—providentially, as he thought (for he cared not how many of his uncles or aunts, if he had a score of them, might die, so as their "exits from a world like this" would benefit *him*)—thrown his Uncle Oliver into his hands. The office of guide and companion was offered to him;—it was the highest object of his ambition; he would delight in his task, and never was pilot-fish more active or constant in its attendance upon the shark, than would be Peregrine Bunce upon his excellent uncle.

"*You shall* command me, sir," said Peregrine, commanding himself in the first instance with his usual tact. "I am entirely at your service; you have but to give your orders—I obey."

"Hey gad, you are a capital fellow," said Noll; "d'y'e remember the old joke of the quack doctor, who returned to England *decoré*, covered with crosses and stars, and all the rest of it?—'Gad,' says he, 'I have received an order from every sovereign in Europe, except the king of Prussia—Frederick the Great, as they call him.'—'Hey, what!' said a wag who was by, 'why do you except *him*?—to my knowledge *he* sent you an *order*, and a peremptory one too, to get out of Berlin in twelve hours after you came into it.' Hey gad—that's the way the joke goes."

"I hope," said Peregrine, "your orders will not be so absolute, or have the effect of banishing me from your Berlin?"

"Hey gad, that's good—carriage, Berlin?—ha! ha! ha!" said Noll;—"no, no; you know I'm too glad to have you with me—only I'm not selfish—can't bear people that are. I know that, dull as I call you, just by way of joke, you are sought and admired in society, and I don't think it fair to keep you out of it,—hey?"

"I assure you, sir," said Peregrine, "that no society pleases me so much, as that in which I find affection blended with rational quiet. I am sure of one thing, that if you determine not to return to Twigglesford——"

"Oh, I've made up my mind about *that*," said Noll; "all decided—sent down my orders—about the people, and the dinners, and the suppers. No, no!—I did mean, as you know, to stay here; but, one can't be certain—'nothing certain,' as the old joke goes, 'but death and quarter-day.'" And again Noll fell into a serious reverie.

"Were you ever at Cheltenham, sir?" said Peregrine.

"Yes, many years ago," said Noll; "then it was like Hammersmith, with green benches along the sides of the street; and where, as somebody has written in a book, the company made parties to take physic, and walked about in the gardens till they were remarkably unwell, to the sound of horns and clarionets."

"It is very much improved and enlarged beyond belief, since that period," said Peregrine, who had a hankering after Cheltenham.

"Enlarged, I dare say," said Noll, "if not improved. 'Everything grows up, except,' as the joke goes, 'old men and cows' tails, and they grow downward.'"

"Leamington, sir?" said Peregrine, inquiringly.

"I know nothing about that," said Noll; "I don't much fancy inland watering-places. If I *am* to change my air, I prefer the mighty sea. I liked the little I saw of Brighton; but then, hey gad, I know that won't do for you. Well now, about Leamington—I don't mind, provided we can get there in the carriage, without touching the capsized skates of any of those infernal railways."

"Oh," said Peregrine, "there still do exist some records of the finest roads in the world, and some vestiges of the most comfortable inns that ever country possessed; but you must be

quick, uncle ; for modern improvements travel at such a pace, that in another ten years, nothing will be left to move upon but these mighty monopolies."

" Ten years, Perry ! " said Noll ; " that'll last my time, depend upon it, as I myself shall be, as the printseller's catalogue says, ' en-graved after *Ten years* ; ' but if you *have* a fancy for Leamington, I'm your man."

" I should like it, sir," said Peregrine.

" What do they do there ? " asked Noll.

" Why, sir," said Peregrine, " they get up early, and drink the waters."

" Oh, like Cheltenham," said Noll.

" And walk about," said Peregrine.

" To music ? " asked Noll.

" I cannot say," replied the nephew ; " but the place is exceedingly pretty. The houses and hotels are extremely comfortable—the air is excellent—and the society agreeable and *recherché*."

" Ah, *recherché*," said Noll, " which means, I suppose, that you may venture to play whist without the fear of being cheated ; or walk down the street, and not lose your pocket-handkerchief out of your coat-pocket, as a matter of certainty."

" I never play whist," said Peregrine, " and always carry my handkerchief in a side pocket."

" Prudent Perry," said Noll, " always right—always cautious—generous, but careful—good fellow, good fellow. Then let us go to Leamington."

These words were music, sweet as that of the spheres, to Peregrine—it was a vast relief—it was a change—it was something in a new line.

" But where does it lie ? " said Noll ; " warm weather, eh ?—Couldn't we see Brummagem ? "

" Birmingham ! " said Peregrine, shocked at his uncle's vulgar mode of pronunciation.

" No, Mr. Peregrine," replied Noll ; " Brummagem—which is the right and proper name of the town—derived, sir, from Bromwitch ; and you just turn to your authorities, and your roots, and all the rest of it, and see how, except from an affectation which I hate, you could ever make Bromwitch-ham, or Brummagem, into Birmingham ?—Why, no more, sir, than you could convert a Brummagem cutlass into a Toledo rapier. I am one of those, Perry, who call a spade, a spade ; and so I call Brummagem, Brummagem. And I should like to see it—and

go to it—and all that. I like to see manufactories—and industry—and the prosperity which application of labour—mingled with genius, for so it is—produces. So come, let us start to-morrow, or the day after; and off we go to Brummagem, throwing overboard altogether the old joke about the Vulcans and the Venuses—ha! ha! ha!—it was censorious, misplaced, absurd; but, hey gad, it was a good joke at the time, nevertheless."

Peregrine here was at fault, and so much the better; even if he had remembered, or even heard, the libellous couplet, his delight at having carried the point of keeping his uncle with him, or rather attaching himself to his uncle, was so complete and unqualified, that he could recollect nothing, nor think of anything, but his progress.

An hour did not elapse before Limpus was summoned, and orders issued to get the carriage properly prepared for travelling, to have it sent to the builder Briggs to be examined—screwed up where loose, oiled where stiff, and, in short, to be put into what Oliver called "marching order." Still, however, Peregrine could not fail to observe, that the usually natural humour of his relation had given place to forced efforts to seem to be *that* which he really and in heart was not.

One thing alone disturbed the noble mind of Peregrine, and that was the consideration of his own improvidence, in having retaken his "residence;" however, by dint of an extra dose of exceedingly powerful port wine, recommended after dinner by his uncle, who, unlike professional practitioners, swallowed a great quantity of the medicine he prescribed, he continued to sleep through the night unvisited by the visions of fairies in the shape of farthings, by which his slumbers, when at all disturbed, were wont to be haunted.

There is a family anecdote on record, in which Uncle Noll, who was by no means stingy, but, on the contrary, rather enjoyed working his nephew's pocket whenever he found or suspected anything like shyness or dislike of disbursement, figured with some effect; and they who take time to consider that the main source, at present and *in future*, of Peregrine's prosperity was Uncle Noll himself, will perceive that it was his wagery rather than anything else, which induced him to make the bargain about to be recorded, and hold his nephew to the fulfilment of his share of its conditions.

Peregrine and his uncle had been staying together somewhere in the west of England, when, the party at the house—sweet scene of their friendly visit and hospitable reception—breaking

up, Peregrine announced to Noll his intention of starting per coach outside, the following morning. Noll had his carriage and servant—Peregrine, upon that occasion, had his servant too, but no carriage. Knowing his uncle's eccentricities, Peregrine, who never meant to do anything but accompany Noll in his comfortable travelling-chariot, leaving Tim to share the rumble with Limpus, only made the announcement in order to secure the invitation.

This Noll knew.—A tennis-ball, on a wet clay wall, could not have hit less effectively than the hint.

"Gad," said Uncle Noll, "why go on the coach?—why not go with *me*?"

"Sir, you are too good," said Peregrine.

"Not a bit of it," said Noll, "I make the proposal as a matter of joint economy; instead of paying your fare, and that of your man, per coach, club with me for the post-horses, and there you are—travelling snug and comfortable like a gentleman, and benefiting by the pleasure of my — no—that's not quite what I mean—giving me the benefit of your agreeable society."

Peregrine certainly was not entirely prepared for the proposition, because the making it was unlike the sort of thing he should have expected from Noll. He hesitated for a moment, and was evidently calculating at what amount of sacrifice he could fall into the arrangement.

"Well," said Noll, seeing what was passing in his mind,— "well, Perry, my boy, don't worry about *that*. 'I'll be kind in my carriage,' as the old joke goes;—you and your man shall have free passage, with one proviso, if we should happen to want anything to eat or drink on the road, you shall pay for *that*."

"Oh," said Peregrine, having ascertained that at the rate of two shillings per mile, for a pair of horses (boy included), the postage from Ciderton Hall to Covent Garden would amount to rather more than fourteen pounds,—"with all my heart, uncle; and you shall see that you sha'n't be stinted."

This compact was concluded. Peregrine calculated upon stopping as they passed through Bath, and on sleeping either at Marlborough, or perhaps at Speenhamland, and so being clear of the concern before dinner-time in town on the day after their departure from Ciderton.

The morning was bright and beautiful—the Ciderton family saw them off, after a hearty Somersetshire breakfast, and waved

their hands in kind adieus, as the carriage rolled away from the hospitable mansion.

"Capital breakfasts, to be sure," said Peregrine, "they always have at Ciderton;—after that of this morning, I think one may fairly hold out till dinner."

"Yes," said Noll,—"may be so. Travelling, however, sharpens the appetite—change of air—change of scene—the exercise. I never eat half so much as when I am getting over the ground."

The conversation, or rather the dialogue, here took another turn, and before the agreeable companions had said much more upon the subject under discussion, they were both fast asleep, whence they were roused by the abrupt stopping of the carriage at the door of the Swan at Wells, accompanied by the familiar cry of "First turn out," the sound of which satisfactorily accounted for the sudden cessation of motion, which strangely, but naturally, awoke them.

"Eh, what!" said Uncle Noll, "oh, dear me, dear me, I have been dreaming.—What! hey gad—Oh—I see—Wells, Wells—by the way, Limpus, pay for the horses—three and sixpence the boy—long stage;—very good time;—gad, Peregrine, do you know *that* clouted cream, or that fried fish, or something I took at breakfast, didn't agree with me. Here, call the waiter, Perry.—I'll have a small glass of brandy."

"What, refreshing already!" thought Peregrine.

"It will set all to rights," said Noll, "and get me an appetite for luncheon at Bath."

This was still worse; however, the bargain was a bargain, and so Peregrine did as he was bid, and paid for the brandy. This disbursement *per contra* in the posting account was nothing.

Uncle Noll felt, as he anticipated, much better after the brandy, and complained of nothing until within a mile of Bath, when he announced himself to be as hungry as a hunter.

"I hope," said Peregrine, "you won't spoil your dinner by eating anything till we get to Marlborough or Hungerford."

"Hungerford," said Noll, chuckling at his own conceit, and still more at the eventual result of the journey,—"Hungerford sounds like a good place to dine at with an appetite; hey gad, you are a wag."

Everybody knows that the stage between Wells and Bath is no joke to a "pair," and Uncle Noll never would go four. Radstock Hill, of itself, is a pretty pitch; but to Peregrine every minute of their progress seemed an hour, so nervous did

he begin to grow, as he calculated upon his uncle's growing appetite, and the dread of any temptation to bait at Bath.

Noll again subsided into another sweet sleep. Peregrine, not so much soothed as excited, remained on the alert, and when the carriage again stopped at the White Hart, and the out-running waiters officially opened the door of the carriage, and flapped down the steps with a noise and energy which appear to all such operators essential and necessary attributes of respect on the one hand, and dignity on the other, Peregrine could have found it in his heart to have kicked, or even killed them, for their activity.

"Hey gad," said Noll, "here we are—Bath—White Hart—so much the better—brush up your Greek, Perry.—' APIΣΤΟΝ ΜΕΝ ΥΔΩΡP,' there you have it—it reads beautifully—' Water's best, after all.'—Hey gad, so I think, but not before—what—come along, as the old joke goes, 'Bath water is better than Bath wine,—that won't do for *me*.—We'll try that quarter forth-with. Here, Limpus, let them take the carriage round—I'll have some luncheon; and if," added he, turning to Peregrine, "there *should* be a dory or so—for at Ciderton the fish was abominable—I don't know that I sha'n't indulge—at least, if it's quite in season, and all that—hey gad, you—don't you mind—the old joke goes, 'Nunkyn pays for me,'—quite the reverse now; Perry pays for Nunkyn, hey gad, you."

The real truth conveyed by Noll's jocose exclamation was painful in the extreme; and here, at a subsequent period of his life to that to which our notice has been already attracted, the absurd quibble of Dumbledore at Brighton about "Nunkyn aut nunquam," brought the "joke, as it went," painfully to his recollection.

There *were* dories—the real Johns; and there were other "ill-shaped fishes," and, in fact, as he who knows the White Hart must know, there was everything. Even Quin himself, whose "snug lying in the abbey" hard by seems to sanction the great cause of gastronomy, would, if he could, have vouch'd for the excellency of the *cuisine*; and so, what with the brandy-created appetite, &c. &c., Uncle Noll decided upon having some luncheon forthwith, in, order to give time to get ready a remarkably nice little dinner.

"What, sir," said Peregrine, "luncheon and dinner too!—When do you mean to start again?"

"Why," said Uncle Noll, "to-morrow, after breakfast, I think—I like Bath for a short visit.—I know two or three

people here ; and when I have had some luncheon, I shall be able to climb up the sides of the tea-kettle, and call upon them, and so get back to our *tête-à-tête* repast—then enjoy our wine, and whatever may follow—then go to roost—‘ Bedfordshire,’ as the old joke goes ;—so, up in the morning—a walk—a look at the market—a jolly good breakfast, and so forwards—eh, Peregrine ? ”

“ I thought, sir,” said Peregrine, “ that you were anxious to get to town.”

“ So I was,” replied Oliver Bunce, “ but I find you such an agreeable companion, that I am charmed from my expedition ; so come, let us be comfortable.”

Peregrine dared not for his life appear to regret the change in his uncle’s determination, and, above all, was most assiduous that he should not betray himself by any alteration in the expression of his countenance, when he heard Noll at luncheon calling for the most *recherché* liqueurs, and ordering two bottles of champagne to be ready for dinner at six—just iced to a turn, and no more ; and speaking inquisitorially to the head waiter, as to the relative characters of the port wine and the comparative virtues of the claret ; promising, moreover, to discourse with the master of the house on the subject, when he returned to dress for dinner.

Luncheon ended, the walk began. The climbing up and the sliding down were performed. Noll at length got down again upon the level of Pulteney Street, and, leaning upon his nephew’s arm, rather rejoiced that neither General Taganrag nor Admiral Macdoodle happened to be at home when they called.

“ They would, either of them,” said he, “ have pressed us to come and dine with them.”

“ I wish they had,” thought Peregrine.

“ And if they *had*, ” continued Noll, “ I should have shown them exactly the difference of it—quite the reverse—I should have insisted upon their dining with *us*—I beg pardon—I mean *you*. ”

Peregrine felt charmed that he had missed them.

“ However, let us get home, and see all made snug and comfortable ; hey gad, you — ”

It would be tiring the reader to follow out this little adventure in detail. Suffice it to say, that Uncle Noll drank deeply of the most expensive wines ; that when, after breakfast, they left Bath, they only reached Marlborough before Uncle Noll de-

clared that the Castle, as it then was, was the only inn in England which he could not pass without stopping at it. Then again a luncheon, with all the etcetera, was served—more delay—more expense. Time wore on, and, by the greatest exertions Noll could or would make, the Pelican at Speenhamland was the very farthest point he could touch that day; so that in that then admirable hostelry, Peregrine had the torment to see a bill as long as a stair-carpet presented to him before his departure in the morning, setting forth, in the most beautiful copper-plate-looking handwriting, all the varieties of dishes which Uncle Noll had ordered, together with the detailed charges of dressing, ditto; sauce, ditto; truffles, ditto, &c. &c. &c., still feeling it impossible, under his circumstances, to make a complaint.

The next morning they left Speenhamland; and, just before they reached Reading, Uncle Noll expressed a vast wish to go and look at White-Knights, a wish which, as it only involved a *détour* of four or five miles, Peregrine rather encouraged. So, when the travellers reached the Bear, Noll directed the people to put a pair of horses to the carriage, to go to White-Knights and back. This operation was immediately performed.

“How far do you call it from this?” said Noll.

“Why, sir, we generally charge six miles,” said the waiter; —“it’s rather better than three.”

“I don’t ask you what you charge,” said Noll.

“Liberal uncle!” said Peregrine.

“And to us it don’t matter, for we must come back with the same horses. How long shall we be going, seeing the place, and coming back?”

“Why, sir,” said the waiter, “that ‘pends entirely on your way of looking at the place; if you just wait to take what the French gentlemen here calls a *coup’dheal* of the premises and that, perhaps, sir, it won’t take you more than an hour; but if you are bottomists, and want to examinate the great variety of plants, flowers, and trees, it is quite impossible to say how long you may be detained.”

“Sir,” said Noll, “I know nothing of what you call bottomy. I don’t know a dahlia from a dandelion, nor a crocus from a carnation. I wish to see the place, sir—the house, sir.”

“Why then, sir, I should say,” said the waiter, “that in less than two hours you might be back, because our osses is uncommon fast.”

“What is it o’clock?” said Noll.

“Half-past twelve, sir,” said the waiter.

"Just right," answered Noll; "we shall be back by a little after two—have a good luncheon ready—broiled fowl, mushroom sauce, and any little kickshaw, as the French spell, *quelque-chose*, besides. I have an old friend who lives up in the Forbury, and if I have time I'll ask him to join us, Perry; but, at all events, tell the cook to make things comfortable, hey gad.—The horses ready?—then go along—or, stop —"

What new misery was to be accumulated on Peregrine's head, he could scarcely anticipate; but, as everything seemed to conspire against him, he felt assured that the halt just called was most ominous.

"Stop!" repeated Uncle Noll; "here, Limpus! you don't want to see White-Knights, or black nights, or anything of the sort—you stay here; my nephew's servant can do all we want in the way of opening doors, etcetera, etcetera. So you run up to Dr. Goodman, my old friend in the Forbury, and say, with my compliments, that I could not pass through Reading without inquiring after him, and I shall be too happy if he will come and pick a bit of luncheon at two, hey gad—you understand?"

"Yes, sir," said Limpus, "I think I do, and what I don't, I've no doubt this gentleman," pointing to the waiter, "will teach me."

As poor Peregrine had anticipated, sure enough it came to pass. Here was another man to be fed; and, moreover and beyond all that, the delay occasioned by the visit to White-Knights and the luncheon promised a strong and, as he apprehended, an insurmountable impediment to their reaching London even that day. However, he gilded his face with smiles, and laughed in the midst of his grief.

All that he had in his worst mood anticipated came to pass, and even more; for on their return from White-Knights, not only did they find Dr. Goodman ready to receive them, but two of his sons—one who had, only the day before, returned from a four years' spell of service as lieutenant in one of His Majesty's ships; and the other the eldest of the family, who was destined to succeed the Doctor when doctoring was past with the old gentleman. Thus, by a kind civility towards Uncle Noll, whose kindness and anxiety about the family they duly appreciated, knowing how pleased he would be to see these sprouting scions of so good a stock, Peregrine found himself engaged to provide a luncheon—of which, owing to the breakfast he had eaten, he could not himself partake—for five. Noll pressed them to drink wine—winked, and nodded, and said it was all very well to call

it luncheon, but that *he* knew, three o'clock was not an unreasonable dinner-hour in the country, and, as none of them were tied to time, they might just as well make up their mind to a brief enjoyment of the present.

The guests needed little pressing—the brandy disappeared, the wine flowed liberally, and everything was jollity and mirth; one only had to make an effort to be gay—Peregrine. However, when five o'clock came, he became anxious as to their future progress, and then Uncle Noll suggested staying where they were till the morning.

To this Peregrine ventured to object, by reminding his uncle of some engagements which he had for the morrow, and which really were important; and thereupon he urged upon the old gentleman with more than his wonted energy.

Unhappy Peregrine! he succeeded in this appeal, and at half-past five the horses were ordered. He knew his duty, and before they rolled up to the door, he proceeded, according to compact, to pay the bill, which he thought enormous—naturally enough. However, the thing was done—the carriage ready, and Uncle Noll deposited in one of its corners. Peregrine expressed himself quite delighted at having made the acquaintance of the Goodman family, and off they bowled.

"Mind, mind!" cried Oliver Bunce, "you boy, mind!—not to Maidenhead,—Salt Hill—Salt Hill is my stage!"

"Very well, sir," said the boy, who was sixty-one. "Make out the ticket, Tim."

"Why Salt Hill, uncle?" said Peregrine; "the other stages divide the road better."

"I say Salt Hill," said Uncle Noll, who was somewhat elated; "I manage the posting department—you command the commissariat."

"*Le Roi le veut.*"—The ticket was so made out. Oliver fell asleep, and Peregrine fell to calculating.

They reached Salt Hill in safety. The windmill stood before them in all its rubicundity—the old halt, and the old question—horses on? Peregrine had just got an affirmative answer on his tongue.

"Oh no—no, no," said Uncle Noll—"too late, too late—seven o'clock and past.—No, no—we'll stop here."

"Stop?" said Peregrine.

"Yes, sir, stop!" replied Oliver. "Open the door—let us out. I suppose we can have beds—and dinner—and a comfortable sitting-room?"

"Everything, sir, you could wish," said some official.

"What does he mean?" thought Peregrine.

"Come, start, Master Peregrine," said the old gentleman. "I'm tired, and I want some refreshment; so show the way, eh, Limpus? Mind, see the carriage safe—lock up coach-houses! hey gad—you—will show us upstairs; send the chambermaid; let us see our bed-rooms. Ah—well—this—this is our sitting-room—very nice and neat—isn't it, Peregrine? This will do—we get better as we get nearer home."

"What, sir," said an officer high in command—"what would you like for dinner?"

To this question Peregrine expected to hear his uncle answer—"No dinner—some tea and toast.—We dined at Reading,"—or some such thing; but no—

"Dinner," said Noll,—"why I suppose here you have everything—everything always. I say, Perry, let us leave it to them—that's the way. Just send us up the best dinner you can—not overloaded—we are but two; but here *recherché*, eh?—hey gad—don't you see?"

This mandate for the unlimited indulgence in taste and talent, and their consequent expenses, was worse than all; and when, in the sequel, he saw—having eaten as ferociously as possible at Reading, in order to secure to himself, at least, a due share of the spoil—four waiters, each the shadow of him who preceded him, all dressed in blue coats, white waistcoats, and short black tights and stockings to match, all bearing covered dishes, containing something, headed by the windmill himself, tottering under the weight of a massive silver tureen, full of turtle, he absolutely sickened at the sight.

However, the ceremony was gone through. Noll indulged again in champagne—claret he upon this occasion preferred to port. The innumerable dishes were taken untasted away, and after some consolation in the plain brandy-and-water way, Noll retired to rest, quite satisfied at the success of his plan in making a bargain with his economical nephew.

The next day brought them to London—not, however, without some more frolicsome assaults upon Peregrine's purse. All this Peregrine bore well, and took care to appear to Noll to bear it much better than he really did. Such, however, was the effect of his acting, and such the unquestionable partiality which his uncle felt for him, that, except in the laugh against him, he suffered nothing eventually by the expedition; for Noll, having ascertained what his frolic had cost him, gave him a cheque for

the amount, and as much more as would, at any period of his life, have induced him to undergo a similar process.

Knowing the generous character of his uncle through this cheap-bought experience, Peregrine was too happy to become, at a somewhat more advanced period of his life, his travelling companion again ; and, therefore, meeting the views and the evident anxiety of the old gentleman to quit London, just at the moment that leaving it himself was a grand object, he did not regret when he heard the last “slam” of the carriage door, which buttoned them up at the door of the Tavistock Hotel, on their start for Leamington *vid Brummagem.*

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## CHAPTER XX.

THERE was an air of comfort in the arrangement of Uncle Noll’s carriage—a sort of provision for contingencies in all its appurtenances—which afforded Peregrine the highest satisfaction ; and perhaps, as he was one of those persons who never suffer the recollection of past misfortunes to prey long or deeply on their minds, he was seldom happier than when he found himself tucked up with his uncle, starting for their progress.

We do not profess to write tours. St. Alban’s—Redburn—with its pretty visitor ; Dunstable, Henley in Arden—none of them picturesque, call for no remark ;—Daventry—Weedon—ruined by railroads—Coventry, to which Peregrine ought rather to have been sent than taken, were passed, and before eleven o’clock at night uncle and nephew were safely deposited in Dee’s hotel in Birmingham, where having ordered supper, and having carefully avoided the second parlour on the left hand of the hall, in which—why it is beyond the power of the historian to say—the most odious smell exists, they sat themselves down to eat and drink until it was time to go to sleep.

Birmingham (or, as Uncle Noll had it, Brummagem) is a vastly extensive town, and some parts of it are really splendid. New Street, adorned with the school, and topped by the town-hall, is one of the finest thoroughfares in England. Its churches are noble, its manufactories wonderful, its inns capital ; and Noll looked forward for a stroll in the morning, before their departure for Leamington, with anxious anticipation.

There was in Uncle Noll's character and disposition very much indeed to be pleased with—not merely looking at the superficialities which grew out as it were of a jolly old gentleman fond of his jokes and his comforts (which, by the way, are qualities not to be despised in a travelling companion who comes under the before-mentioned class of the “Nunky pays for me”); but there was an activity in his mind, fed probably from a fund of knowledge or information, where picked up or whence obtained he himself scarcely remembered, although he did perfectly remember the points which he thought it either amusing or interesting to touch upon, when walking with Peregrine; so that, really and truly, Peregrine never was conscious of that sort of dulness with which the world generally imagines elderly gentlemen annoy, overcome, and suffocate their juniors when in a state of domestication.

A stroll with the old gentleman was therefore something more than a matter of duty with his nephew, and they started for their walk from the hotel on a fine fresh morning for the purpose of “seeing the lions,” although Noll had seen them often before, and was therefore more competent to act showman; although, taking the school and the town-hall as specimens, the lions of Birmingham grow so fast, that it requires no little activity to watch their progress, not to speak of the railroad, with its station-house (fit place for the reception of railroad passengers), and all the buildings and warehouses incidental to the gigantic abominations. One striking advantage has been achieved by the inhabitants of Birmingham by the completion of the grand enterprise,—they have been enlightened as to the taste of fresh fish, which, as Noll in an instant perceived, is furnished by noon from Billingsgate market of the same morning, and dispensed from a shop in Broad Street daily.

But there were of course novelties with Noll—there were enlightenments—modern inventions and innovations. Noll was *au fait* as regarded the more ancient institutions—he could, and did descant with Peregrine upon all the most interesting topics connected not only with Brumwicham, but upon any other town which he might honour with a visit, even for the first time; and accordingly their stroll was enlivened by his details of the De Bermingham family, and the influence of Andomore de Valence, and Leland's pretty praise of its appearance in the reign of Henry VIII.

It must be admitted that Peregrine, however much generally pleased and edified by his uncle's able illustrations, was still

occupied with the hopes and anxieties which we too well know occupied his mind ; and although he readily admitted the spaciousness of the streets, the handsomeness of the churches, the beauty of the new free school, and the magnificence of the town-hall, his anxiety to get to Leamington, which he looked forward to as the new “scene of action,” could with difficulty be concealed from his companion.

The flight of time is rapid, even at his slowest apparent rate of going, and after a not long protracted visitation of the “sights,” Noll suggested ordering the carriage—after luncheon—and proceeding to Leamington, by which Peregrine was exceedingly charmed and cheered, having heard from his uncle a few broken hints and observations touching a family located there, which he thought, from the little he could gather, appeared to be admirably suited to his never ceasing, never successful pursuit. The more his thoughts leaned that way, the less he said upon the subject, lest he should animate the old gentleman into something like a jocose and peculiar introduction to them when they met.

There was indeed another family deposited in this vale of health, as some folks reckon it, of whom Noll knew something, and whose rank—if not their wealth—was considerably superior to the other; but upon this point Peregrine was equally cautious and wary, for he had learnt by sad experience that it was not quite so easy to swagger into domestic circles of respectability, and throw his handkerchief, as at one period of his life he had impertinently considered it.

Besides, there was another reason *now* why Peregrine should alter his course of proceeding ; in other cases he had, except just at the time of the break-down at the Dumbledores', always acted independently of his uncle, who consequently took his impressions of all the past affairs and failures from his hopeful nephew's own showing. *Now* they were to be together, and Noll's shrewdness and perception, as Peregrine knew, were not easily to be beaten.

Having, therefore, first tired and then refreshed himself, the worthy old gentleman bestowed himself in his easy carriage, not, however, without ceremoniously thanking Mr. Dee, or his representative, for the attention with which they had been treated, and the comforts they had experienced ; and once more our hero felt himself on the flood-tide which was to lead him to conquest.

“Fine place Brummagem !” said Noll—“great sight to see —works—minds—bodies—all actively employed—great progress

—march, march of intellect and intelligence—forward, sir—go ahead—curious.”

All this was muttered in a sort of under-tone, the points as it were of a reverie, which Peregrine did not judge it wise to disturb ; the reverie was followed, as Peregrine had anticipated, by a nap, the occurrence of which gave the young gentleman a fair opportunity of calculating his present chances as regarded his future prospects. It afforded him time for a consideration of the comparative merits of the families with whom, according to Noll’s *carte du pays*, they were destined most to be domesticated during their stay.

The more important *ménage* was that of the Earl and Countess of Shiversdale, with whom Noll had been acquainted for many years, but whom he had not met for a very long time. They were the coldest people in the world—good beyond praise—but, oh ! so stiff—his lordship was always compared with a Corinthian column—tall, cold, and polished. Lady Shiversdale was not quite so unapproachable as her husband, but they were just as distant and unsociable in their ordinary intercourse with each other as with the rest of the world. Nevertheless, they *had* a daughter, Lady Grace—a favourite daughter—with all the parental frigidity, a face that would have driven an artist mad, and a figure quite suitable to the face.

Now Lady Grace had eight thousand pounds by way of fortune. Whatever the affectionate regards of her parents might hereafter add to the amount, nobody of course could guess. Her brother George, Viscount Vinnicombe, was abroad in a diplomatic character ; and, upon the whole, the splendour of the family was more like plating than gilding. In this affair the question with Peregrine was as to the “name of the thing.” The Lady Grace Bunce would sound remarkably well, only that she was a most painfully striking instance of the rashness of parents who bestow upon their daughters names full of beautiful meanings, which daughters grow up, perhaps, such beings as the noble lady just now under discussion.

The other family upon which he proposed to practise his wizard arts was certainly of a different class ; but as he had seen neither, their relative merits were unknown to him. This “faction” consisted of Mr. and Mrs. Misty, and, of course, their daughter Elizabeth ; for to Peregrine a family without a marrying girl was “of no avail.”

Mr. Misty was either a retired merchant or the son of a retired merchant ; his peculiar faculty was that of never remem-

bering or distinguishing anything that ever occurred to him in the whole course of his life ; the consequence was, that he was actually forced into a constant and perpetual reference to his wife upon all subjects, who upon all subjects had but one phrase for use, but which was unquestionably a perfect truism—it was this—"I haven't an idea,"—in which terms, admitted to be most just and correct, she always replied to the applications for mental assistance by her husband. That she had not an idea was the main point of her admission ; for if he were in the habit of confusing himself, her assistance was sure to make his "confusion worse confounded."

Peregrine knew these people only by report, but the more Noll talked of them, the more Peregrine longed for Leamington. If he could achieve a Lady Grace, it certainly would be something ; but then, if Betsy Misty was a steady-going good girl, he might perhaps do better than climb to the aristocracy ; in which supposition we very much agree with him ; since the condescension of Lady Grace, even if her heart did yield—of which he had no doubt—would place him, as a vast number of gentlemen have previously discovered, in a "false position ;" to remedy which subsequently is not so easy a matter. The ground, however, had been pointed out, and it was with no small delight he found himself early in the afternoon on the road to the Arena.

As the wheels whirled round, Peregrine's mind seemed to expand ; bright views opened to his imagination, and, Antæus-like, he came to the combat refreshed by his tumbles. Never having been at Leamington, the approaching novelty afforded him a new excitement, and his speculations, like those of his uncle, equally innocent in the way of topography, as to what Leamington was like, and whether they should like *it*, not to speak of the company whom they might meet, were most interesting.

"My Lady Greasewrister,  
And Madam Van Twister,  
Her ladyship's sister,  
Lord Cram, and Lord Vulture,  
Sir Brandish O'Culter,  
With Marshal Carowzer,  
And old Lady Mouzer,  
And the great Hanoverian Baron Pansmowzer."

Anything upon earth, in the present temper of his mind, would be gratifying, excepting always the sight of Miss Gray.

son's beaming countenance, or the sound of Major M'Larrup's key-bugle.

Leamington at length achieved, the effect it produced upon both uncle and nephew was favourable in the extreme, and the Clarendon Hotel, which had been well recommended, was adopted and approved of. Whether there be really a master or a mistress to it, the historian cannot say ; but in their absence, or in the absence of their appearance, a republic of exceedingly civil servants overwhelmed the visitors with courtesies and attention, and installed them forthwith in a most comfortable sitting-room, promising all the little domestic *agrément*s, which, to a man of Uncle Noll's time of life, had become essential to the well-being of his body and the placidity and evenness of his mind. He paced the drawing-room, opened one of the windows, looked down the street, and then, closing it again, said with a chuckling laugh to Peregrine—

"This is the sort of country I admire, Perry ;—if you weren't told you were in Warwickshire, you might fancy yourself in Bedford Place, Bloomsbury, where my old friend Lawrence Lumps lives ; but we'll explore—hey gad—or, as my dear departed aunt Louisa Jane used to say, we'll explode the neighbourhood ; first order dinner—hey gad, you—look at the coals, whole tombs full—all snug—I like this place."

"It promises well," said Peregrine, who, in the cautious spirit of his character, was anxious to see a little more of the paved paradise before he pledged himself to an opinion, and not put quite at his ease by his uncle's deputing *him* to order dinner. Thoughts of other days came across his mind, and he was placed in the exceedingly awkward position of either commanding a good dinner, of which he was remarkably fond, with the anticipatory feeling of having to pay for it, or of suggesting a remarkably bad one, under the same apprehension, when perhaps eventually he should have nothing to do with the disbursements.

While these little preliminaries were being carefully arranged, it was somewhere about the owl-light, when it was the fashion to promenade for the benefit of the health. Such is the force of first impressions, that old Noll was quite delighted with all he saw ; and as they descended to the gayer parts of Old Leamington, and he found himself almost jostled by the walkers, he kept nudging Peregrine, saying at the same time, "I like this—this is very pleasant—hey gad, you, what—this is country—hey—"

Now there was reason in Uncle Noll's remark ; for, with all

the advantages of climate, he could enjoy the amusements which were associated in his mind with the metropolis, and to which it seemed he had become more addicted since his last somewhat more than usually protracted stay at the Tavistock; and beyond this, there had arisen out of circumstances a reason for his less liking his "aunciente home" than heretofore, seeing that Peregrine could not, with any comfort to himself, become his uncle's guest and companion.

Away walked the visitors, and at each step his opinion of his new location improved, till by the time he had crossed the bridge, and found himself amongst the Regent-street-looking shops of Bath-terrace, he almost began to repent that they had established themselves in the more elevated and genteeler quarter of the town. However, Noll was in a good humour—an old child, pleased with a new toy—and as full of what he called fun as ever he was in his life.

Peregrine, whose eye was always fixed on the main chance, anticipated in each coming group one of those two parties (as the money-lenders say) in whose proceedings he was himself—that's the word, *himself*—all the rest of the world was a blank—most probably to be deeply interested; but whether it was because it was nearly dusk, or that Noll's eyes were not quick, or that they did *not* promenade that day, certain it is that uncle and nephew returned to the Clarendon Hotel without having recognized any human being of their acquaintance.

During dinner Oliver Bunce indulged largely in a habit of his, which was neither more nor less than that of inquiring of the waiter sundry particulars of the people with whom he felt himself acquainted. A waiter, to *be* a waiter, should never be at fault upon such occasions, whether he knows the people inquired after or not—it is a part of his *métier* to afford every kind of information ("which if he have not of himself, let him invent") to his master's customers. The waiter in question, however, was not "up to his work." He had heard of Lord and Lady Shiversdale, who were living at Iceland Villa, but of Mr., Mrs., and Miss Misty he had never heard.

"Rich man too," said Noll, half-aside to Perry—"very rich—well—hey gad—to-morrow we'll be out and about, and see whether, if we can't get wealth, we can get health. Fine doctors here, Perry—cure you of everything in no time—railroad pace—all iron—nothing like it, if you can stand it; if not, why I suppose you blow up. I want none of that—no, as the old joke goes, 'my doctors are Doctor Dull, Doctor Quiet, and Doctor

Merriman,' and if you haven't your mind at ease they might make you swallow all the rails round St. James's Park, pounded into powder, without being of use. Hey, what is that somebody says in a play about a 'diseased minister'?"

"Shakspeare," said Peregrine, "says—!"

"‘Thou canst not minister to a mind diseased.’"

"Exactly so," said Noll, "that's it—a diseased mind—I said diseased minister—I beg the minister's pardon with all my soul; but that's my meaning, and I should have written it down myself, if Shakspeare had not done it beforehand."

"That the assertion is a truism incontrovertible," said Peregrine, "I can vouch for, from my own personal experience."

"So can I—so can I, Perry," said the old gentleman, filling his glass—"ingratitude—unkindness—eh?—those are things to affect the heart and mind. I have suffered from them—and then to think—"

And then Noll fell into a sort of musing fit, whilst he was in which his affectionate nephew gazed attentively upon him. It was evident the deceased relation had behaved ill to him—so much the better—Perry would make up to him in kindness. That a tear did drop from one of the gooseberry eyes of poor Noll is unquestionable; but he attempted to wipe one off with his hand, and fell again to marvelling as to the supply of coals, which such of our readers who have visited Warwickshire and Staffordshire know to be perfectly astounding to the eyes of foreigners.

The evening passed away, and the travellers went early to bed, it having been insinuated by the waiter that early hours were the fashion at Leamington. Indeed, it has been a serious matter of speculation with some very learned writers on the subject, whether, if early hours, proper exercise, and a moderated regimen were observed as regularly and rigidly everywhere else as they are at the "Spas," all the advantage supposed to be derived from drinking the waters might not be just as well attained at Clapham, Camberwell, Peckham, or Putney, as by a pilgrimage to Carlsruhe, Baden-Baden, or that most favourable of all retreats with the ladies, Kissingen.

Their first day, however, was passed in vain. Oliver, however anxious to obtain a footing for his nephew in what he considered an "eligible circle," could by no means screw up his courage to call at Lord Shiversdale's. He certainly knew him and his lady,

and talked “uncommonly big” as to the acquaintance that subsisted between them ; yet when he came to an approach to Iceland Villa, Noll’s courage failed—as indeed would have failed that of any human being who knew the character and constitution of the curdled whig—(whig being to be taken, not politically, but physically, as “sour milk”—)and those of his lady, which were as has already been observed, equally repulsive and forbidding.

How strange it seems, when everybody is conscious of the advantages of amity and suavity of manner (even if one is doubtful of their entire sincerity) that anybody should adopt a “style” so totally at variance with those agreeable attributes, and, as it should seem, without the slightest reason ! If Lord Shiversdale’s repulsive coldness seemed to be habitual—those who either liked or affected to like him affirmed that this defect in his manners arose from shyness—those who were not so well acquainted with his lordship attributed it to pride ; but whatever was the cause, the effect produced was simply this, that after he had thawed, in the course of an evening, into something like a complacent sociability, and a man fancied that he was really making his way through the ice, he would make his bow and depart for bed. The next morning, when he came down to breakfast, the ice had again collected, and the whole business of beginning an acquaintance with him was to be begun and gone over again.

Lady Shiversdale might have been, and somebody once said she *had* been, a very nice agreeable person, when she was young ; but the force of habit, and the influence of constant association and juxtaposition, had rendered her a very counterpart of her lord ; while Lady Grace, exceedingly pale and thin, and looking as if nothing that she wore could be made to fit her, instead of possessing any of the negative good qualities, which the parental affirmatively bad ones might have been expected to produce, was in manner below zero.

It was the knowledge of this family *shyness* that kept Uncle Noll from making his call at Iceland Lodge, and as he never came out boldly with any proposition that way tending, his pleasant and subservient nephew never even hinted at such a proceeding ; but while strolling or rather pattering along near the bridge, he all at once heard the old gentleman give one of those chuckling crowings which indicated surprise not unmixed with pleasure.

“ Hey gad, you now,” said Noll—“ there she is—there she is—and Betsy too—here, here—come, Perry.”

Peregrine of course obeyed the summons, which, as Noll was very much in the habit of suiting the action to the word, was accompanied by a hasty dragging upon the coat of his nephew, and in a few seconds brought him to the rear of two ladies, one of a somewhat formidable size, the other thin and wasp-waisted, which the poor creature having been told by some cockney admirer, instead of being a deformity, was a beauty, she had accordingly screwed herself in till she looked like an hour-glass, and as unlike the Medicean Venus as possible. They reached the pair, and Noll, with his umbrella (without which he never moved), having given the larger lady of the two a playful poke, they both turned round, and presented to the wondering eyes of Peregrine the persons of Mrs. and Miss Misty.

"Dear me, Mr. Bunce," said the lady, "I could not think what it was happening to me—how do you do? Betsy dear, you remember Mr. Bunce?"

"La, ma, to be sure," said Betsy.

And now for one moment let us transcribe the impression made upon Peregrine, who at the moment only surmised that these were the Mistys. The mother, as we have previously observed, was, as they say of any convenient occurrence, "as broad as she was long." Her face was exceedingly like that of a fish, and, moreover, she went about with her mouth open, and when she spoke, it was thickly—gutturally is not a nice word, but it is *the* word; and if Peregrine had had any doubt as to who the ladies were, the first words she croaked out would have satisfied him.

"What have you done with the governor?" said Noll,—"where is he?"

"I haven't an idea," was the reply.

And now for Betsy—she was lovely enough in her way—she was red and white, with largish and somewhat straggling teeth—good eyes—coarse hair—red elbows—with a constant laugh on her countenance, triumphantly evident of good temper—ankles thick—feet not small—but withal, in her manner there was a playfulness which even at first sight pleased Peregrine, who took very good care, when he had been introduced to the young lady, to let her understand what his opinion of her was. He could not have fallen in with a young lady in all Leamington more intelligent in the language of eyes, or more ready to comprehend what he so suddenly seemed so anxious to impart. They understood each other in ten minutes.

Miss Elizabeth Misty—or, as she was familiarly called, Betsy—was what is called a comical girl. She saw fun in everything, and called it fun—everything was “so funny.” Vesuvius was funny—a ship launch was funny—the coronation was funny—even the consecration of one of the fancy flower-gardens, in which people, in these days of fanciful refinement, think it genteel and agreeable to be buried, was funny; nothing came amiss to her in that way; as a proof of which, when her venerated father tumbled down a whole flight of stairs, and luckily pitching upon his head did not hurt himself, she declared she had never seen anything so funny in all her life.

With this disposition it will of course be concluded that she was remarkably good-tempered—never was anything more amiable: it was, however, a boisterous amiability, blended with an off-handed way of saying strange things; but then Betsy was an original, and not only controlled but terrified her vegetating parents into an implicit obedience to her wishes, and even into an admiration of her wonderful talents.

It must be admitted that Peregrine was somewhat disappointed in the personal appearance of both mother and daughter; but although there existed between the parent and the child a sort of natural promise of a future likeness as time wore on, he almost hoped that the great scheme of nature would never be quite worked out, and that the young lady, let time do his worst, would never be quite like the old one.

To Misty himself Peregrine had not been yet introduced—he was at some one of the libraries, spelling a London newspaper, with a personal anxiety peculiar in a certain degree to himself. Misty’s ambition was to subscribe to every charitable, literary, artistic, scientific, educational, religious, or popular institution. Not that he was either of a literary turn, or had a taste for the arts or sciences, or cared about the education of the people, or the increased accommodation in churches, or about emigration or immigration, or colonization or cultivation, or about free-labour sugar, or steam navigation, or the supersession of climbing chimney-sweepers,—no; but he delighted in seeing his name printed and published in the lists of subscribers to all such undertakings, and in going and dining at the anniversary meetings, to have his health drunk and to make a speech.

Never was Mr. Misty at home, or comfortably in his element, except when he was breathing the foul atmosphere of a public dinner-room;—from the fumes of dirty mock-turtle soup arose the ambrosial air on which he lived, and the noise and clatter of

knives, forks, and plates, made the music which he loved to hear ; but then he was *the* Mr. Misty, honoured of tavern landlords and loved of tavern waiters. Never did Mr. Misty take his place except upon the dais—first cuts and first helps always came to Mr. Misty ; care was taken that the best wine should be set before Mr. Misty ; and when the period arrived for drinking that decoction of horsebeans in water called by the cockneys coffee, certain was it that Mr. Misty would find in company with *his* cup a glass of the best Curaçoa that the house could afford.

It may be as well, perhaps, before we dismiss this worthy philanthropist, to relate two brief anecdotes, which seem to be tolerably illustrative of his character. One relates to the speech which he always and invariably made upon all occasions of mingled conviviality and charity, when beef and benevolence, soup and sympathy, fish and fraternity, goodness and glee-singing, health-drinking and humanity, went hand in hand, and which, as far as the annals of tavern oratory have been consulted, had not even the merit of originality.

This was the speech of Mr. Christopher Sugg Misty :—

“ GENTLEMEN,—I feel considerable pleasure in thanking the assembled Society for the honour which they have this day done me in drinking my health. Gentlemen—the Society, the anniversary of which we have this day assembled to celebrate, is a Society of which society generally may be proud ; and I have only this to say to the Society assembled so numerously to-day, that if any Society could really benefit society, *this* Society is *that* Society.”

How did the knives and plates rattle, and how did the glasses dance, as soon as this most apposite and universally applicable speech was concluded ! but it once failed—and failed only because Mr. Christopher Sugg Misty, having actually attained the honours of the chair, resolved to soar a little above his usual flight ; and, Icarus-like, see what happened to him.

Extensive as was his charity—of that sort which begins at home—it so happened that Mr. Misty was advertised as steward at two public dinners on one day, and being somewhat puzzled which to honour, and moreover confused as to the localities, he ordered his servant to drive to the London Tavern, where he believed the anniversary of the Humane Society was to be celebrated ; there he accordingly arrived, and, *faute de mieux*, actually attained the chair.

It so happened, however, that the banquet over which he was actually presiding was *not* in honour of the Humane Society, but of the Marine Society, of which he was equally the pride and ornament ; and accordingly, when after dinner the boys of the Marine Society were, as usual, paraded, he stopped them in front of the chair, and having fired off his "Society" speech, he added, with an earnestness and emphasis which struck astonishment into the hearers, this—

"And, gentlemen, when I see before me this crowd of youths, all rescued from a watery —, I cannot but feel that this Society is to society —."

Hereabouts Christopher Sugg Misty was stopped by a little red-faced man, in a flaxen wig and spectacles, a high official on the occasion, who sat opposite to him, and suggested that he had misunderstood the objects of the "Society," which went to the full extent of preparing the "crowd of youths" before him for watery graves, rather than rescuing them from such a fate.

The reader perhaps has seen enough of the Mistys to appreciate their merits. Misty all for charity—his daughter all for fun—and his wife without an idea ; but it is as well to make him perfectly acquainted with a family in which our friend Peregrine may really be "*settled at last.*"

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## CHAPTER XXI.

BETSY MISTY was as playful as a kitten—she affected to be constantly afraid of being tickled—and had not half a minim of sentimentality in her whole composition. She had a trick of crying out before she was hurt,—had a great store of conundrums at hand,—was dotingly fond of plays and players,—had a sovereign contempt for her seniors, either in rank or age,—and was about as vulgar a young person as ever fancied herself genteel.

But this very pertness and playfulness gave Peregrine a considerable share of encouragement ; he saw in half an hour that if she liked her lover there would be no subsequent difficulty in making the match, inasmuch as, in expressing her exceedingly mean opinion of all "who ought to control her," her respectable

parents did not fail to receive their due share of satire and censure.

In fact, Peregrine was so very much convinced of what must be his ultimate success with her, if he chose, that he was obliged to put the curb on, instead of the snaffle, not wishing to conclude the affair until he had seen and judged of the nobler family and the Lady Grace, after whose distinguishing title he somehow hankered.

The Mistys gave Uncle Noll and his nephew a general invitation to their house, which the old gentleman accepted conditionally, that they were not to intrude upon their dinners ; Noll justly calculating, from one day's experience, that the hotel would suit him better, inasmuch as he could order what he liked, thinking moreover that Peregrine's conversational qualities would come out better in a walk in the afternoon and a gossip in the evening, when Betsy, besides her conundrums and albums, and all that sort of thing, would play him all the waltzes and quadrilles which were popular at the place, and so win his heart through his ears—a conquest which, if making a tremendous noise had anything to do with its success, could not fail ; for, without taste or genius, or any other qualification for the art, she gave all her jig tunes with a three Litzt power upon her pianoforte, which made it shake, and seemed (as somebody said of Litzt himself) to bring her within the provisions of the act for preventing barbarity to quadrupeds.

However, they were as intimate friends at the end of the first six hours of their acquaintance as if they had known each other for six years.

"Have you got an album, Mr. Bunce ?" said Betsy.

"No," said Bunce.

"How funny !" said the young lady ; "I thought everybody had albums now. I have got such a love of a one—I'll show it you presently,—with such lots of autographs, and nice bits of poetry, all regular manuscripts—none copied out—and such beautiful views. Ma has got an album too, but she doesn't approve of half the things I have got in mine ; but then she *is* so funny."

Peregrine inclined his head assentingly to the expressions of Miss Misty's filial opinion, not quite charmed with the matter or the manner in which it was delivered. His eyes glanced over her animated countenance, and met hers. Considering the extreme shortness of time which had elapsed since he had been presented to her, he thought there was a more than de-

sirable animation in these expressions ; but, laying it all to the account of his own powers of captivation, he felt that his present triumph was the most decided, and the most rapidly achieved, of any upon which he had previously piqued himself. However, he resolved to watch the course of the young lady's proceedings when other men of her acquaintance might be of the party, in order to decide whether she adopted the free-and-easy playfulness which was so remarkable in her manner, particularly towards himself, or whether, as the saying goes, "it was a way she had."

An opportunity of exercising this *surveillance* soon presented itself. They had not walked many yards farther towards Misty's home, before they met two exceedingly "nice men," one tipped and tufted *à la militaire*, the other clean-shorn and civil-looking. Their reception was exceedingly cordial ; and Miss Misty's shake of the soldier's hand was something "uncommon."

"By Jove, Betsy," said he with the tips, not even deigning to cast a look upon Peregrine, "you will be the death of poor little Rufus ;—do be merciful to him, because, though you seem to think little of him, he would be a great loss to society and the world at large."

"You certainly are breaking his heart," said the other stranger.

"Nonsense!" said Betsy, "I don't want to break his heart ; but it is such fun to worry him."

"You go to the ball to-morrow, of course?" said Tips

"I suppose so," said Miss Misty,—"if I can get a chaperone ; for I don't think ma will go."

"Chaperone!" said the shorn man, "what do you want with a chaperone?"

"Nothing, I can tell you," said the young lady ; "I am old enough and wise enough to take care of myself ; only one must have an old thing with one wherever one goes."

"It needn't be old," said Tips ; "there's your beautiful friend, Mrs. Edgington ; why not put yourself under her care to-morrow?"

"I don't know that she is going," said Betsy.

"If you required her services," said Tips, "depend upon it she wouldn't refuse."

"And then you would have her to flirt with all the evening," said Miss Misty,—"what fun—well, I don't care—I'll ask her to oblige you ; nay more, I'll do you a still greater favour—I'll

send you as my ambassador with a message to her on the subject ; so there'll be an excuse for a call and a talk this morning, even if you should not prevail upon her to go to-morrow."

" I shall be too glad to undertake the mission," said Tips.

" Do," replied Betsy ; " and, as I suppose you both intend to walk yourselves into our drawing-rooms this evening, you can bring me her answer."

" Good, good," said Tips. " Have you many people coming ? "

" Nobody," said Betsy, — " just ourselves — regular humdrums. Pa's whist and Ma's work ; but we'll get up some fun."

After a few more interchanges of common-places similar to these, worth recording only as illustrations of character, which did not pass unheeded by Peregrine, the party parted ; Peregrine having undergone a ten minutes' ordeal of standing before two men, who did not deign to appear conscious of his presence, and making one of four people who knew nothing of each other, if we except the knowledge he had obtained of the young lady during his brief association with her.

" George is too bad," said the young lady, as they pursued their way, after separating from her gay and gallant friends ; " he is always quizzing me about Rufus Chasemore ; he is the greatest fun to me in the world ; he is all sentiment and delicacy, and full of fine speeches, and is, as he says, over head and ears in love with *me* ; but his sentiment, and all the rest of it, are, as pa says, very much at a discount here, inasmuch, as everybody knows, that he is neither more nor less than what is called a fortune-hunter, and, after having been barred out of half a dozen houses by prudent parents, is trying to get into ours. I am his ' angel ' just now ; wherever I am, he is. my shadow. Then the life I lead him ! —but he is a mercenary man. I dare say what I am saying sounds very shocking ; but it is true, and I always say what comes uppermost. I would rather marry a libertine—because, if he loved one, one might reclaim him—than a mean-spirited creature who only took one for what he could get."

" I perfectly agree with you," said Peregrine ; " nothing can be more revolting than such interested conduct."

" La, bless you ! " said Betsy, whose rate of talking was something to which Peregrine was not accustomed, and which put his lungs and constitution sadly to the test, " why an old

schoolfellow of mine, who is since married to a delightful person, was absolutely hunted down by one of these persevering pickpockets—that's what I call them—and found him out just in time—sent him off, and saved herself."

"Very right—very wise indeed," said Peregrine, wondering whether, in the chapter of accidents, he had again fallen in with some of the friends and connections of his former "subjects," and not daring for his life to inquire the names of the parties to whom his off-hand vivacious companion had alluded.

"You'll come to the ball to-morrow?" said Betsy to her new and intimate acquaintance.

"Why," said Peregrine, "it depends upon my uncle—I don't like leaving him alone."

"Alone," said Betsy; "he shan't be left alone; if he don't like to come with us, there's whist at our house every evening. Pa, ma, Mrs. Sissmore, old Colonel Cactus, Miss Dryman, and half a dozen more, all ready when sent for. Oh, you must come, and you shall see me worry that odious Chasemore—such fun!"

This last promise brought them to the door of the paternal mansion—in bounded Betsy.

"Come along; let's go and see if luncheon's ready."

Peregrine followed.

"Oh my!" exclaimed the young lady, "everything's cold; we must have some more things sent up—I had no idea it was so late." Saying which, she rang the bell with a force and vigour which might have called

"Spirits from the vasty deep."

Servants came—refreshments were ordered—and Betsy ran upstairs to see about the "arrangements."

Her mother, whose vacuity of mind has already been touched upon, gave evidence of having been pretty in her youth, and in the sleepy blue eye and dimpled chin might be traced the remains of what had been in girlhood a most agreeable countenance. Her sleepy eye had assumed a fishiness—the dimpled chin had grown double—she seemed to speak, when she made the effort, with difficulty; and all she appeared to enjoy was the diversion of knitting, netting, or knotting, as the case might be.

"Ma," said Betsy, bursting into the drawing-room, "where's pa?"

"I haven't an idea," said Mrs. Misty, in her usual thick tone of enunciation.

"You are going to take a drive?" said the daughter.

"Yes," replied the mother, "I suppose I must."

"We can take Mr. Bunce with us then," said Betsy.

"Who?" asked the mother.

"Mr. Bunce," said Betsy; "you know whom I mean?"

"Haven't an idea," said the lady.

"Who was here yesterday with his uncle—great friends of pa's," said Miss Misty.

"Oh," answered mamma, "of course—take him by all means."

"Then I'll ask him; he is downstairs at luncheon. What time did you order the carriage?"

"I haven't an idea, child," was the reply; "but I dare say the coachman knows."

After this most judicious guess on the part of the parent, the daughter returned to the dining-room, where numerous *rechauffées* were presented to Peregrine's eye. His diffidence—such as it was—might, under any other circumstances, in a stranger's house, have prevented his doing what is called justice to the meal—for meal it is—which comes just at the time of day when there is appetite to eat it; but when he beheld the manner in which his young friend proceeded to action, all his doubts and delicacies vanished, and, in emulating her healthful exertions in the destructive line, he so fortified his inward man, that after three or four glasses of wine, in two of which he was joined by Miss Misty, who, although she looked strong and robust, and was finely developed, was, in point of fact, threatened with consumption, he felt himself quite at home.

"Carriage will be here at half-past three," said Betsy; "you'll come with us?"

"My uncle—"

"Never mind your uncle," answered the young lady, "he is all safe—gone out with pa to call on Lord Shiversdale. Oh! such bores you never saw; and as for Lady Grace, she is one of the T. B.'s, regular."

"A T. B.," said Peregrine,—"might I ask—I —"

"Don't you know what the T. B.'s are?" said Betsy,—"why Tea and Bible people; she is very good, and all that, and goes to all the schools and societies, but is such a horrid bore; however, pa got very intimate with the family on account of his belonging to so many charities, and we are very good friends;

only Lady Shiversdale thinks *me*—at least, I think so—lost to all sense of propriety, because I laugh and talk, and, in short, do as I please, which I will do, because it's good fun. Oh, I hear the carriage—I'll just run upstairs and change my bonnet, for this won't do for the carriage, and be down in five minutes ; ma will take quite as long equipping ; so amuse yourself if you can for that time, and we shall be ready to start."

Away she went, full of her wonted vivacity, leaving Peregrine in a state of amazement, not only at her volubility, but at the evident power she possessed over everything in and about the house ; she

"Reigned and ruled without control ;"

directed, commanded, and countermanaged ; while the implicit devotion of the servant to her orders, satisfied him that she was as "independent" a young lady as he could hope to find on a long summer's day.

And then, although reduced to the scale of a Leamington lodging-house, there was an air of solid wealth and comfort about everything—such profusion—and the things so good of their kind ;—a fact which he was the more anxious to press upon Noll at the earliest opportunity, in the hope of inducing him to rescind his determination of always dining at the hotel. And then was to come the drive—the small talk—the gaiety ;—he thought one more glass of the merchant's old port—brought down specially from London in Miss Betsy's consumptive case—would do him good. He accordingly filled a bumper and swallowed it, with a degree of taste and trepidation hardly to be described, lest the door should open, and he be detected in raising his spirits for the purpose of "making himself agreeable."

He had just saved his distance, when a servant announced that the carriage was ready ; Mrs. Misty having, by dint of leaning one hand on the balusters and the other on the butler, reached the hall ; Betsy following, and Peregrine brought up the rear. Peregrine had seen the carriage at the door, which did not quite come up to his expectations, and he felt rather anxious not to be paraded in it through the streets of Leamington ; but to show what short-sighted mortals we are, as the party approached the house door, this despised and uncoveted vehicle, which was in waiting for somebody else, drew off to make way for a handsome—but too fine—pink-coloured, open barouche, drawn by four horses, driven by two postilions. The postilions,

it is true, wore cords, not leathers, and tops of thin velvet jockey caps, twisted tufts of gold-lace fringe ; they were, however, very "grand ;" and, with two livery servants in the rumble, the turn-out was just calculated to make the little boys in the street wonder, and cry out, "Oh my !"

This took Peregrine aback : he was by no means prepared for the display, nor, from the terms in which he had always been accustomed to hear his Uncle Noll speak of Misty and his family, was he prepared to believe them capable of making it ; and as he seated himself in the vehicle, he felt himself struggling with himself, in order to conceal the effects of a surprise, the appearance of which, he apprehended, it might be ill-bred to suffer.

" Which way shall we go, ma ?" said Betsy.

" I haven't an idea," replied Ma.

" Shall we take Mr. Bunce to see Kenilworth ?" asked the young lady.

Now, to Peregrine the idea of going to see anything was worse than death ; he would have been contented to be rolled about in the carriage as long as the horses could pull ; but the getting out to climb up a narrow flint-studded path, to look at a view, with the certainty of having to scramble and slide down it again, or, *vice versa*, to be toppled into a valley, to admire a roofless tower and a paneless window, reflected in a stagnant pool, half covered with duckweed, with the full conviction of having to work his way up again, was to Peregrine worse than purgatory. His argument went to the establishment of an already undoubted fact, that one window is very like another window, and one gate very similar to another gate ; and, as to what are called classical associations, Peregrine cared no more for a place because Queen Elizabeth had sat, dined, or slept in it, than he would have cared if she never had seen it. His notion, moreover, of ruins, was very unromantic,—he thought every house ought to have its roof, walls, and windows—its kitchen—its wine-cellars, and its stables : and when they came to be past that, they had no attractions for *him*. To say truth, Betsy Misty was a good deal of his opinion, which she did not venture to express, but only hinted Kenilworth, because she thought they might have some fun there. However, whether Peregrine permitted his countenance to be the index of his mind or not, it is impossible to say ; but Betsy, patting him playfully on the arm, said that he should not be bored with Kenilworth.

"Stephens, tell them to go to Warwick—to the castle; but mind, stop at the bottom of the hill—we must walk up."

A touch of the hat of Mr. Stephens confirmed the order, and off they went.

"You'll like Warwick Castle," said Betsy; "we can see the Warwick Vase—oh, such funny faces all round it;—it has been kept out in a green-house till it is getting green itself."

Peregrine saw he was now regularly in for another sight, and so, as he was with the amiable Betsy, he cared little, excepting that the last portion of her orders to the servant still rang in his ears, "Stop at the bottom of the hill—we must walk up."

However, he was, as it turned out, destined to be relieved—if the intervention of a greater evil might be called relief—from his ascent; for they had scarcely proceeded a quarter of a mile, when, as, by order of Mr. Misty, his equipage proceeded through the streets of Leamington at a foot-pace, it had not carried them far before they met and were stopped by the tall man with tips, who had already been a source of annoyance to Peregrine while walking with Betsy.

"I have executed the commission," said he to Betsy, placing his white-gloved hands on the barouche. "She will be too happy."

"What!" said Betsy, "did you find her at home?"

"No," said Tips, "she was just going out. I walked down with her to the post-office, where she deposited two or three letters;—as I told her, I thought when ladies carried their own letters to the post, it looked as if there was something odd about it."

"And didn't she tell you, you were very impertinent?" said Betsy.

The *naïveté* of the question, and the manner in which it was put, took Peregrine by surprise, and he burst into a fit of laughter, which attracted the notice of Tips so particularly, that Betsy felt it almost necessary to make them acquainted.

"George," said the young lady, "allow me to present to you Mr. Bunce, a great friend of pa's.—Mr. Bunce, Captain Titten-hanger."

Bunce bowed awkwardly. The captain, with his elbow leaning on the carriage, touched his hat militarily, in his facetious manner, and said no more; but, immediately making up his white-gloved hands into a sort of cave, to the opening of which Betsy lent her rolling ear, he muttered something intentionally unintelligible to the rest of the party, which set her off

into one of her fits of laughter, ending with, " You don't mean it"—a little more muttering—" oh what fun!" —and then Captain Tittenhanger laughed too.

From Scrub in the play upwards, in their degree, vulgar people, whenever laughing is going on, the true cause of which they do not understand, always believe themselves to be the object of it. This has been noticed more than once, and never was stronger proof of the truth of the rule than upon the present occasion. Peregrine felt certain, considering how soon the communication and the laugh followed the ceremony of his introduction to the distinguished officer, that he was the subject of the whispered narrative, and that—which was not unnatural with his dread of the military—some one, if not more, of his speculative adventures had become known. Betsy certainly continued laughing much longer than the occasion seemed to require; but poor Peregrine had no resource, for Mrs. Misty had, during the stop of the carriage, fallen into a quiet slumber, from which Peregrine did not feel himself as yet sufficiently intimate with the family to awaken her. Thus was he forced to sit, with a sort of forced indefinite kind of grin on his countenance, completely " basketed" as to the conversation, yet still wishing to seem, and feel if he could, one of the party.

" Where are you going?" said the captain.

" To Warwick," said Betsy, " come—come with us."

" No, thank you," said the captain, " I am going to the animal-magnetism man's lecture; you had much better go there."

" I should like it vastly," said Miss Misty, " it must be capital fun. Ma," said the young lady, " should you like to go to the animal-magnetism lecture?"

" Haven't an idea," replied the lady, waking herself just sufficiently to give utterance to the words.

" Come along then," said the captain, much to Peregrine's horror, and adding to all his other mishaps by stepping, or rather jumping, into the carriage.

" Well then, Mr. Bunce, we will go to Warwick some other day," said Miss Misty.

Peregrine bowed assent.

" Any day will do for *that*," said Captain Tittenhanger, " the vase won't run away;" having made which smart and startling observation, he directed Stephens to this lecturing locality, and away they went. Peregrine's spirits were damped, his eloquence was checked, and his placidity ruffled by the intrusion of this to

him most unwelcome visitor. It was true he was in the carriage with the charming Betsy ; but there was this fine-looking fellow, six feet high, with his white forehead, great sparkling black eyes, mustachios black as ink, curled so as to give the best possible effect to two rows of even snowy teeth ; dressed in the very best style, perfectly at his ease, evidently clever, and uncommonly good-natured ; insensible, however, to the claim of Peregrine upon his attention, and entirely in what may be called the jocose confidence of the young lady, by which is to be understood that they had nicknames for everybody, none of whom poor Peregrine knew, and by-words allegorical or figurative for places and things ; so that our hero, repulsed by the somnolency of the old lady, had nothing to do but to continue his plan of seeming to be quite delighted with what was going on.

The conversation, or rather dialogue—for only the two spoke—turned naturally upon what they were going to see, and the declaration of Betsy that she would not permit the man to magnetize her, a declaration made amidst many loud laughs, into which she generally burst after some monosyllabic whispers of the captain's. Onward they went, and had just reached the rooms where the display was to take place, when they met Lady Shiversdale and Lady Grace driving in a little unpretending pony-chaise, the single fat little animal drawing it being partially covered with a green net, to keep him comfortable, his ears being, moreover, covered with what looked like nankeen thumb-stalls ; all was as plain and as simple as it could be, and afforded a striking contrast to the gingerbread finery of the Misty turnout. To be sure, behind the little pony-chaise there did ride the Earl's coachman, mounted on one of the Earl's sixteen-hands-and-a-half high blood bay coach-horses, on the winkers of whose head-stall shone the Earl's coronet.

Lady Shiversdale drew up to the side of the carriage, and Peregrine could not fail being struck with the extraordinary contrast afforded between the two equipages and their occupants. Cold, perhaps, Lady Shiversdale might be, so might be Lady Grace ; but there were in their manner an unaffected gentleness, and a total absence of effort or display, which, to use a somewhat hackneyed phrase, was quite refreshing to Peregrine after the boisterous mirth and uninvited laughter of the previous quarter of an hour.

"Well, Mrs. Misty," said Lady Shiversdale, "I have left my poor dear Lord engaged in a violent argument with Mr. Misty and his friend—politics, I believe ; however, they seem to be all

exceedingly harmonious, each of them perfectly satisfied that he is right."

"Are you going to this place?" said Mrs. Misty; "this lecture—I haven't an idea what it is about, but they will go."

"No," said Lady Shiversdale, "we are going to look after our schools; the lectures are too learned for us, and the experiments too exciting; so we'll leave you to proceed your own way."

During this brief parley, Peregrine's eyes had been attentively watching Lady Grace, and probably, in the course of the time, might have accidentally, for a moment, met hers; certain it is, that the effect she had unconsciously produced upon him was very remarkable. The force of conversation was, as we have said, something; the total absence of pretension on the part of the young lady, and an implied deference of manner, while only looking and listening to what was passing, unsettled, if they did not quite settle, Peregrine's thoughts and feelings, touching the comparative qualities of his two new fair friends. So early and so soon was he placed in a state of uncertainty, in the conduct of his new attack.

The carriages separated, and the barouche reached the arena in which the wonderful experiments of Monsieur Le Fou—so he was called—were to be exhibited: they drew up to the door.

"Ma, love," said Miss Misty, "where is your purse?"

"I haven't an idea," said Mrs. Misty.

"That's good fun," exclaimed Betsy, bursting into a loud laugh, "I have no money."

"Nor I a sou," said Captain Tittenhanger, casting a conversational glance at Betsy, full of the inference that their new acquaintance would, to use the captain's most usual expression, fork out; nor was he wrong.

"Oh!" said Peregrine, "I have got change—allow me ——"

"Thanks," said Betsy; "but it is rather too hard to spoil your drive to Warwick and make you paymaster here; however, we are all very honest—you shall be repaid."

"It is rather a heavy draw," said the captain, "five shillings apiece, laid on high on purpose to keep out the unintellectual."

"So much the better," said Peregrine, "the more select." After a few more smiles, and smirks, and fidgets, the party descended from the carriage, which was ordered home, and, under the auspices of Peregrine as paymaster, entered the room, which had been prepared for the mysterious operations.

That the English people have been cheated by a fellow who advertised that he would get into a quart bottle is true;—that

the inhabitants of the metropolis quitted their homes and slept in the fields, because a mad life-guardsman foretold an earthquake ;—that the scratchings and knockings of Cock-lane Fanny were attested by several clergymen of the Church of England, and that even Dr. Johnson himself is supposed to have given credit to their mysterious character, is most certain ;—but still, even with these facts before us, combined with the pious belief entertained by many in the divinity of the late Mrs. Southcote, and the success of the homeopathic system of medicine, one could hardly fancy it possible that rational beings could be for one moment duped or deceived as to animal magnetism, or, as it is now nicknamed, after its inventor or discoverer, mesmerism. However, so it is ; and amongst the innocent victims to the credulity of others, poor Peregrine Bunce was one.

To the credit of the intellectual qualities of the Leamingtonian natives and visitors, the audience, or spectators, or whatever they might be most properly called, were respectable rather than numerous. Nearly in the centre of the lecture-room was raised a small stage, covered with green baize, on which stood a table and two chairs. Being a “five-shilling” company, and proportionably well-bred, they had been exceedingly quiet, save and except when an irresistible cough of an invalid broke upon the ear, until Betsy and her captain entered the apartment, when the scientific silence was at an end. The jokes which they enjoyed between themselves were much too good to be relished only with smothered laughs ; and long before the *début* of the professor, the young lady had made up her mind to be magnetized herself in the course of the lecture.

After being kept waiting a sufficiently long time to beget an impatient anxiety for the commencement of the performance, the professor, Monsieur Le Fou, made his appearance, leading in a prettyish-looking girl, dressed, or rather, considering it was morning, undressed for the performance. A few persons knocked their sticks and umbrellas on the floor, which produced sundry bows from the gentleman, and a timid, retiring, sinking sort of a curtsey from the lady.

Silence having, without much difficulty, been obtained, M. Le Fou proceeded to give a brief history of the art, some splendid specimens of which he was about to exhibit, from the time of Mesmer, whose patients were tied together with cords, and sat pinching each other’s thumbs ; a statement which produced one of Betsy’s loudest laughs, and certainly disconcerted the professor not a little.

Finding that the theory did not meet with quite so much admiration as perhaps he had anticipated, he proceeded to the practical part of the show, and commenced his operations upon the young lady, who in a few minutes was fast asleep; whereupon pins were handed round by the waiters. In order that the company might satisfy themselves of the success of the experiment, several of the party availed themselves of the opportunity of testing the truth; and at this period of the performance, the solemnity of the scene was again marred by another burst of laughter from Miss Misty, caused by a suggestion of Captain Tittenhanger's, which, while it rather worried Peregrine, who had become interested in the scene, evidently annoyed many of the invalid spectators, who took the whole thing *de bonne foi*, and considered mirth, under the circumstances, profanation. Poor Mrs. Misty looked on with vacant gaze, not having an idea what the professor was about, but rather under an impression that all was not quite correct.

Several elderly iron-eaters of both sexes having stuck their pins into the poor girl's head, arms, &c., returned to their seats perfectly satisfied; while the professor entreated some gentleman to come forward and undergo the process. The call was meant to sound general; but never did George Robins catch a bidder's eye sooner than did M. Le Fou catch that of a gentleman who disbelieved the theory, who defied its power, and who desired the test.

"Avancez donc, Monsieur," said Le Fou; "I am too glad to have les disciples nouveaux."

And accordingly, from the opposite side of the room, advanced to the platform a slight, pale, sickly-looking gentleman, who presented his card to the professor. The professor bowed to the ground, and proceeded to install him in the chair.

No sooner had he taken his place than Peregrine's eyes opened wider than they had opened for many a day. In the "subject" now proposed for the instruction and edification of the company, whom should he see before him but his sanctimonious friend of Twigglesford, the Reverend Slobberton Mawks! To describe his horror to know his proximity to, his domestication with, the man who, always hating him, had it now in his power to destroy his matrimonial speculations, would be impossible. All at the moment he inquired of himself was whether these professors ever did kill their patients, and, if they did, whether such a casualty might, under any unfortunate circumstances, happen upon the present occasion.

Mawks took his seat—the professor went to work—the patient went to sleep. Concentrated caustic ammonia was stuffed up his nose; congreve matches were burned under his nostrils, the pin-baskets were handed round again; and Peregrine, resolved to be certain that it *was* his clerical friend, and to satisfy himself of the value of the experiment, took two or three pins, passed over the platform, and jobbed two of them into his cheeks, and one into his head, without certainly producing any visible effect.

Mawks, having continued for a sufficiently long time in this state, was awakened from his slumber by a brace of pistols being fired in his ears, which appeared to have a restorative effect; for he gradually returned to life, when he was kind enough to impart to the company the whole of the sensations he had experienced, and the progress of his “evanescence;” adding that, although the effects were very peculiar, he should have no hesitation in submitting himself another time to the hands of the professor, of whose eminent abilities nobody could possess the slightest doubt.

Applause followed the liberal announcement, and Mawks's eyes followed Peregrine, evidently with an entire sense of the philosophic humanity with which he contributed to make his face a pin-cushion. Peregrine saw that he was “fixed,” and felt it absolutely necessary, as soon as the lecture was over, to do something to avert what he most dreaded at his hands.

At this period it was necessary to make the young lady ecstatic, in order that she might read a letter handed up to the platform, placed between her shoulders behind her back. M. Le Fou explained this feat as the crowning triumph of the art, and the announcement was received with great anxiety. Accordingly, a lady, who appeared to take a vast interest in the science, proposed to write some half a dozen lines, keeping a copy for the satisfaction of the auditors. M. Le Fou was exceedingly grateful, and the young lady being sufficiently worked up for the purpose, the professor placed the paper behind her back.

After two or three extraordinary twitchings, which are, probably, commonly incidental to people who hear with their noses and read with their shoulder-bones, she began distinctly, but hastily, to read—

“Is not this wonderful?—but not more strange than true.—Thank you all.”

Which perusal produced an unexpected effect, for the lines handed up by the lady, were—

“It always delights me to please and obey.—I am happy—so happy I cannot explain.”

A sudden demur took place at this discrepancy, while M. Le Fou, losing temper with his wife (who was the officious independent lady), did not mend the matter by crying out, “Ah! dam, dam, you give de girl number tree 'stead of number two.”

This explanation of the lady’s blunder did not come clear to the auditory; and the young patient, finding she had gotten herself somehow into a scrape, leaped from the platform, and rushed out of the room, screaming most ecstatically and judiciously.

It being then past four o’clock, and no lady or gentleman wishing to have any pins stuck into them, the meeting broke up. The Mistys walked from the rooms; but Peregrine, on a plea of excessive curiosity, remained behind, in order to get hold of Mr. Slobberton Mawks, and hinder him, if possible, from talking more than was necessary about him or his private affairs, during his stay at Leamington.

In pursuance of this scheme he returned to the room, loitered and lingered; and feeling sure that the desired object of his search had not passed into the street, resolved to maintain his blockade, which he did until he succeeded in falling in with his Twigglesford friend. Their recognition was mutual and simultaneous.

“Mr. Mawks,” said Peregrine.

“Hush, hush,” interrupted Mawks, putting his finger to his lips, to indicate that, for some good reason, his real name was not to be mentioned.

“Here,” said Peregrine, “this way for a moment—you must be tired—a glass of negus will do us good.”

Saying which he turned into the hall of the hotel, anxious beyond all measure not to be seen with his companion, and most desirous of housing him in some private retreat, adding—

“Waiter, show us a room.”

“Directly, sir,” said the waiter. “Show these two gentlemen into nineteen—make haste now.”

Mawks following Peregrine’s bidding, or beckoning, entered a parlour. Peregrine, insisting upon it that negus would do them good, ordered consequently, thereupon, two glasses, one for himself and one for his friend.

"I was quite surprised," said Peregrine, "at finding you here."

"I recognized you the moment I mounted," said Mawks.

"Have you been here long?"

"No," said Mawks, "only three or four days."

"Do you propose making any stay?"

"That," said Mawks, "depends on circumstances."

The negus was here brought in, and put down.

"Have you heard anything of our friend Margy?" asked Peregrine.

"Rumours, mere rumours," replied Mawks; "the circumstances which induced me to leave Twigglesford conduce to disinclose me from any very particular inquiries; but I think her father will forgive her."

And now began Peregrine's efforts to ascertain the sort of society in which his companion moved in Leamington, and, should he find him at all in the ascendant, to endeavour to seal his lips as to any knowledge of his failures and disgraceful dismissal by the Mintons, which he did not doubt he had acquired. He was apprehensive, as there is always now a saintly elegiast at all watering-places, that Mawks might be making his way here; and, as Bessy had represented Lady Grace as one of the most remarkable in the Leamington circle of fashion, fancied that he might come in contact with her; and that, seeing Peregrine with her, he might, or rather would, naturally entertain her, in his less serious hours, by a repetition of all he knew about him, the one half of which would ruin his prospects.—Mr. Mawks not perhaps, in fact, being aware of the *dénouement*, that did not take place till after the curate's sudden and unexpected departure.

"You say your stay is uncertain here," said Bunce.

"Yes," said Mawks, looking rather awkward, and rubbing somewhat sensitively the still tingling pin-holes in his cheeks, two of which had been made by his companion.

"What I mean," said Peregrine, "is—that—let us have another glass of negus—one moment—what I mean is, that under particular circumstances connected with the Mintons, I should wish, in case you hear me spoken of in society—that you should not know anything about me."

The waiter entered, and more negus was ordered.

"Not I," said Mawks; "my stay anywhere is not permanent;—I can trust you with my case;—I am not known here as Slobberton Mawks.—Sanford Montclaire is on my card.—I

picked up a little after we parted, by lecturing upon the state of slavery and free trade, but it didn't answer; so then I took to my present line."

"And what may that be?" asked Peregrine.

"What you have seen to-day," replied Mr. Sanford Montclaire.

"To-day!" exclaimed his companion.

"Yes," answered Mawks; "I have engaged myself with Monsieur Le Fou, to perform independent gentleman, and permit myself to be made an example of, at all his magnetic exhibitions. There seems no great sin in it; all the tests are managed so as to give no pain, except the pin-sticking, and that's not much; only now and then some enthusiastic opponent of the system gives an energetic thrust or so; as, witness two to-day I had; but I get my bread and ——"

"What do you secure for this?" said Peregrine, looking all amazement.

"Four shillings an exhibition," said Mawks, "and a shilling extra for every pin;—so now I have opened my heart to you; and all the favour I have to beg in return is, that you never will take the slightest notice of what I have told you, or even affect to have known me."

"Rely upon me," said Peregrine, "not a syllable shall pass my lips; in fact, if we meet in the streets, we will not even recognize each other."

"Not a bit of it," answered Mawks, "let us pass as perfect strangers; besides, I think, after Le Fou's break-down just now, he will probably break up his quarters here, and proceed to Gloucester, in which case I must be off before him. Our travelling together would spoil the interest and the independence. As for the innocent victim of the experiment, who botched the affair to-day, by reading the wrong paper, we picked her up at Doncaster, where she was acting at the play-house. She's sharp, and quick, and understands the humbug capitally. She is a treasure to her employers, and as long as they don't quarrel, they'll get very pretty pickings."

"Then," said Peregrine, anxious to conclude his bargain, "we understand each other."

"Perfectly," replied Mawks.

And so, after finishing the second detachment of negus, which Peregrine most willingly paid for, these worthy gentlemen broke up their conference, of which we have only given a brief outline, and which, as its object was to insure an utter separation of the parties for the future, was perhaps as curiously begun, carried

on, and concluded, as ever a conference was. To Peregrine, however, its points were most satisfactory ; and, when, having shaken hands with his "independent friend" for the last time, as he fervently hoped, he found himself on his way up to the Clarendon, he felt a glow of security against the rural anecdotes of the *partie* pervading his whole frame, not a little increased in agreeableness by the deep satisfaction which he derived from the recollection of the masterly manner in which he had achieved his object.

Peregrine, however, was not "settled" yet.

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## CHAPTER XXII.

"WELL, Peregrine," said uncle Noll, when they again met at dinner at the Clarendon, "how do you like the Mistys?"

"The old gentleman I have not yet seen," was Peregrine Bunce's reply.

"Likely enough; he's a strange fellow—never so much at home, as when he's abroad. That's a paradox, you'll say; but it's true, for all that. A public dinner or a public meeting, no matter on what subject, or of what parties, is the element in which he thrives. There you'll always be sure to see him, and, what's worse, to hear him too.—Ah, Perry, it's a sad thing when men will speak who have nothing to say.—However, we've all our weak side, so why shouldn't old Misty have his, as well as others? But his wife, what do you think of her?"

"Why really I had so few opportunities of conversing with her, that I hardly know what to think."

"Just so," replied Noll, drawing a plate of olives towards him, "but you've not lost much by not chit-chatting with her, for, truth to say, conversation's her weak point, just as speechifying is her husband's. Nevertheless, she's a goot-hearted soul—comfortable—domestic,—&c., and, you must have observed, as round as a beer-barrel, or a fillet of veal. As for her daughter Betsy—he, what? Ah, I see how it is—you know what to think of *her*!—Made good use of your time, I'll be bound—eyes wide open—ears on the stretch, and all that.—Hey, Perry, is it not so?"

"She's a nice girl enough," said Peregrine Bunce, laughing, as

he was expected to do, at his uncle's arch insinuation, "and if I should be so lucky as to hit her fancy——"

"And what's to prevent your hitting her fancy, as you call it? You've had lots of practice in that line. First, there was Margy or Dory Minton, I forget which—next came the widow with the queer name at Brighton——"

"Mrs. Mimminy," modestly suggested Peregrine.

"Right, Mimminy was the word. What a name! No wonder she was in a hurry to change it!—Well, when that affair was at an end, then came the pretty little episode of the Nobbatops and Maria Grayson.—Upon my life, Perry, when I think of the practice you've had, I can see no cause for doubting that you'll make a hit with Betsy Misty. And let me tell you she's a prize well worth striving for.—Twenty thousand three per cents, and ten more when the old fellow dies—not that this will have more than its just weight with you. No, my boy, you're not quite so mercenary as to marry *solely* for money's sake."

"Certainly not," said the shrewd nephew, adroitly giving in to his uncle's notions.

"And not quite such an ass," continued the old gentleman, "as to marry *solely* for sentiment. Hey?"

"Why, as to that," resumed Peregrine, "I should be much more disposed to marry for sentiment than fortune, as, I think, I have sufficiently shown in the affair of Maria Grayson. It was not so much old Nobbatop's smash which broke off that connection, as the flightiness and freedom of manner of the girl herself. But I believe I told you this before, so there's no use in ripping up old grievances."

"Right, lad, quite right; let bygones be bygones;—but to come back to Betsy Misty. If you play your cards well in that quarter, there's no question but you'll win the game. And, egad, she's just the girl to suit you;—lively, frank, susceptible, and all that—never saw a young woman so full of her fun, as she calls it."

"A *leetle* too boisterous," delicately insinuated Peregrine.

"Not a bit of it. I hate your sly, demure prudes, who never speak but in whispers, are ashamed to look a man in the face, and would go off in hysterics at the very idea of an honest English horse-laugh."

"Yet I have heard you speak warmly in praise of feminine gentleness and delicacy, uncle."

"So you have, and so you will again; for I like everything that's natural. So that a girl be unaffected in her character, I

care not whether she be frank or reserved, grave or gay, a hoyden or the reverse. Help yourself and pass the bottle."

Peregrine did as he was desired, and then uncle Noll returned to the subject of Betsy Misty, whom he advised his nephew on no account to lose sight of, as she was very likely, when won, to sober down into an unimpeachable wife. " 'Tis high time," he added, "that you were settled, Perry, and if you fail now, I shall begin to despair of your ever becoming a Benedick."

"I am quite ready to enter the lists," replied Peregrine, "for I like what I have seen of Miss Misty, and have no reason to suppose that she thinks otherwise than favourably of me. We had a great deal of conversation this morning, the result of which was to satisfy me that she has an excellent heart; and when that's the case, uncle," added the young man, throwing as much sentiment as he possibly could into his countenance, "one can put up with a little exuberance of vivacity. But I haven't yet told you that I have a rival in the field."

"Hey?—What?—How?—A rival?"

"So I am given to understand."

"And who told you?"

"The young lady herself!"

"She told you? Well, upon my life, that's plain-speaking with a vengeance—what I call coming to the point without ceremony or loss of time! And who is this rival?"

"A Mr. Rufus Chasemore; but I don't think I've much cause to be afraid of him, for, from what I can gather, he's a mere fortune-hunter, and Miss Misty herself told me that she detested such characters."

"Good girl—excellent girl—ay, she is of the right sort, just fitted to become Mrs. Peregrine Bunce. Woo her, Perry, woo and win her without delay, and I'll not forget you on your wedding-day."

This was delicious music to the ears of Peregrine, whose nature, as has been already shown, was wholly mercenary, and who would not have hesitated to marry a Gorgon or a Fury, provided she brought him a full exchequer.

Accordingly, he thanked his uncle warmly for his intended liberality, and then dexterously gliding from the subject—for he was unwilling to exhibit too much anxiety about "filthy lucre"—he inquired of the old gentleman, whether he would accompany him on the morrow to a ball at the Assembly Rooms, to which he had been specially invited by Miss Misty.

The answer was such as he had anticipated. "Ball!" replied

uncle Oliver, "what should a man at my time of life do at a ball? My dancing days were over before you were born, Perry! It's all very well for young fellows like you to kick up their heels on a chalked floor, and go gallopadding with their partners at the pace of the Flying Childers; but my old stumps have become too stiff and stubborn for any such uses. Yet I have known men, with more years on their back than I have, show off in a good old-fashioned country-dance, with an agility that made one quite forget their age. I remember, in particular, old General Fusby frisking away at seventy years of age, like a harlequin, with one of the prettiest girls I ever saw. How he contrived to secure her, God only knows! but, there he was, whisking her round the room in a waltz—the envy and the wonder of all the young fellows who saw him."

"There's no accounting for tastes, uncle."

"That's just the remark I made when, four years afterwards, the general married his cook—a fat, fubsy wench, as yellow as a brick-bat, and as broad-faced as an Indian squaw, with arms as red as beet-root, and a fist like a quartern loaf. Hah! hah! hah! A good joke, wasn't it? Why don't you laugh?"

"I was thinking, uncle," observed Peregrine, with a fine show of affection, "whether I hadn't better decline going to the ball, for I'm sure you'll be dull alone, and it would spoil all my pleasure to think that while I was doing the agreeable to Miss Misty, you were sitting moping here, with not a soul to speak to."

"Kindly spoken, my boy," replied Uncle Oliver, helping himself to a bumper on the strength of his satisfaction, "a good heart is better than the wisest head that ever sat on a young man's shoulders. But you sha'n't stay at home for me—no, no; go to the ball, make yourself as acceptable as you can to the girl, and if she takes a decided fancy to you, as you appear to have done to her, why, you may consider the matter as fixed. I dare say old Misty and I won't split upon settlements—now don't say a word: I want no thanks, and you know I hate compliments."

Peregrine took the hint, but his silence was a forced one, for he was a capital hand at the complimentary, such being the only coin in whose expenditure he was apt to be profuse. He was indeed one of those remarkably precocious young men, whose worldly shrewdness is some twenty or thirty years in advance of their age, and we shall see in the sequel with what results this premature sagacity was attended.

## CHAPTER XXIII.

THE evening of the ball arrived, and Peregrine Bunce, figged out in his most attractive style, presented himself at the residence of the Mistys, and was shown into the drawing-room, where he found the old gentleman with spectacles on nose, spelling sundry charitable advertisements in the Leamington Spa Chronicle, and his wife seated knitting at a work-table.

When the footman announced the name of "Mr. Peregrine Bunce," Misty, whose head, like his wife's, was none of the clearest, caught only the Christian name, and quietly lifting his eyes from the newspaper, he turned to the lady and said, "Mr. Peregrine! Who is he?"

"Haven't an idea!" replied his wife, with nonchalance, as if it were too severe a labour to make an effort at recollection.

At this moment Peregrine entered the room, and then Mrs. Misty, casting a glance towards him, at once recognized the young man who had accompanied herself and daughter in their carriage drive the previous day, and paid five shillings apiece for their visit to the Animal Magnetism Exhibition.

She accordingly introduced him to her husband, as the nephew of their old friend, Oliver Bunce, which immediately insured him a gracious reception from his well-meaning but somewhat absent-minded host.

Mr. Christopher Sugg Misty was a little thin, wiry, elderly gentleman, with a prodigious large head, on which the bump of benevolence was very strongly developed. His eyes projected like a lobster's; he had two big red ears which stood out on either side his head, like the paddle-boxes of a steamboat; and he had lost all his front teeth, with the exception of two black stumps, which, whenever he happened to smile, lent peculiar sweetness and elegance to his simper. His costume was as odd as his character, with which last the reader is already acquainted. He wore black shorts and gaiters; a black coat singularly eccentric in its fit, and luxuriant to an excess in point of skirts; a white thickly padded neck-kerchief, in which his chin was deeply imbedded; and an old-fashioned gold watch, nearly as large as a warming-pan, whose chain and seals went dangling half-way down to his knees.

"Why don't your uncle accompany you, Mr. Peregrine?"

inquired this original : "if I remember rightly, he is fond of his rubber ; and Mrs. M. and I would have gladly joined him in it."

"He thought it not unlikely, sir, that you might go with Miss Misty to the ball."

"Not I," said Misty with grave formality ; "had it been a public meeting in the cause of charity, or a lecture on some scientific matter, I should most probably have gone, for I think it my duty as a man and a citizen to patronize such things ; but balls are altogether out of my line. And talking of public meetings, Mr. Bunce, perhaps you may have read the speech I made the other day at the anniversary dinner of the Leamington Lying-in Institution ; it was much talked of here at the time, and Colonel Cactus, who is an excellent judge of oratory, told me it was one of the most touching things he ever read."

On Peregrine expressing his regret that he had not yet had an opportunity of perusing this affecting effusion, Mr. Misty consoled him by observing, "Well, never mind, Mr. Bunce, it will be published shortly in a pamphlet, and then I will make a point of sending you a copy."

"Oh, my dear sir," exclaimed Peregrine with transport, "how can I sufficiently thank you for your kindness ? Of all things, public speeches are what I most delight to hear and read, and I am sure I shall devour yours with avidity."

"A very promising young man this," thought Misty. "I must read him my unpublished remarks on emigration, for I clearly see that his opinion is worth having."

"Mr. Bunce," said Mrs. Misty, "you intend, I believe, accompanying my daughter to the ball?"

Peregrine replied in the affirmative, with a low bow.

"She will be down in a few minutes," continued her mother ; "indeed, she would have been here before, but her friend, Mrs. Edgington, who is to act as her chaperone, has just gone up into her dressing-room—you'll like Mrs. Edgington, she's very quiet."

"And very charitable," added Misty, "for she subscribed a guinea last week to the Leamington Orphan Institution."

"Talking of charity," observed Mrs. Misty, whose ideas were seldom remarkable for their logical consecutiveness, "reminds me that I owe you ten shillings for the exhibition of yesterday.—Mr. M.," she added, addressing her husband, "be good enough to return Mr. Peter—I beg his pardon, Mr. Peregrine—Bunce the money he politely laid out—"

"My dear madam," replied the young man, affecting to look exceedingly embarrassed and perplexed, "I beg—I entreat—"

"Business is business," said Misty emphatically, "as I observed in my speech at the last meeting of the Humane Society, at which I had the honour to officiate as chairman;" and with these words, he pulled out a heap of loose cash from the depths of his breeches pockets ; counted out the exact sum of ten shillings ; and deposited them with much formality in Peregrine's willing palms, who, having duly vindicated his delicacy, made no further opposition.

A loud noise of laughter was here heard on the staircase, and presently in bounced the mercurial Betsy, followed by her more pensive friend and chaperone, Mrs. Edgington.

"Oh ma!" she exclaimed, running up to her fond and fat parent, "what *do* you think?"

"Haven't an idea, child!" replied her mother, with her usual apathy.

"Why, Captain Tittenhanger has actually been writing some verses on Mrs. Edgington's eyes!"

"He should have made a speech on them," said Misty, with a faint attempt at a smile.

"I've seen a copy of them," continued Betsy, "and they're so full of fun ! About stars, and diamonds, and loadstones, and all that.—How I'll quiz him about them to-night!"

"For shame, Elizabeth !" exclaimed the more discreet widow, "how *can* you run on so, you silly creature!"

"Oh, Mr. Bunce !" said Betsy, as that gentleman advanced to greet her, "I'm so glad to see you ! How long have you been here ? Why didn't you send up word that you were waiting ?—But come, the carriage is at the door, and we shall not be too early for the ball. Good-bye, pa—good-bye, ma," and taking the offered arm of Peregrine, while Mrs. Edgington hooked herself on to the other, she hurried down stairs to the carriage which was in waiting to convey them to the Assembly Rooms.

Balls all the world over bear a strong family likeness to each other ; more especially in England, where to have seen one, is pretty nearly to have seen all. Rooms lit up to an excess, so that not a single wrinkle under a would-be juvenile dowager's eyes shall escape scrutiny ; floors chalked to represent flowers, fruits, and leaves—most appropriate winter devices ; benches, chairs, &c. &c., running close round the walls ; fiddlers and harpers stuck up in one corner of the apartment ; and in the centre, a set of quadrille-dancers moving about with that happy absence of animal spirits, so characteristic of English recreations,

while some three or four small, wasp-waisted exquisites, too delicate to endure the fatigues of the quadrille, look on with a supercilious smile, lisping the while in soft undertones their opinions of the fair exhibitors ;—such are the usual constituents of a modern ball-room ; while in the adjacent apartment—should there chance to be one adapted to the purpose—card-tables are laid out for the use of the elderly folks, at which you will be pretty sure to see a squat dowager or two, together with divers lean, prim spinsters, with a slight patch of red at the end of their peaked noses, watching each other's play, as viciously as two cats watch each other's movements on the tiles at midnight. This last room is the very temple of dulness, where speech is doled out in mono-syllabic whispers, and where at certain critical points—particularly if the game be whist—faces lengthen visibly, and jaws drop to an extent provocative of dislocation.

There are three degrees of the recreation we have been speaking of—namely, the dance, the ball, and the rout. The former is a sort of sociable hop-on-the-carpet affair—snug, merry, off-hand, and unpretending, where one need not be alarmed at making a false step, or capering in defiance of all the graces. In the country this is usually a Christmas entertainment, and pleasant enough it is—an affectionate family re-union, where the only music is that of the piano-forte, played by some good-natured girl, who has got all the latest quadrilles at her fingers' ends. The ball is a degree more formal and important in its character ; the carpet is taken up, the floor chalked, people come later and go later, are more elaborately dressed, and have a quicker eye to showing off. As for the rout—most appropriately so called—it is merely a ball in the superlative degree—a confused motley gathering of all one's acquaintances, and is not considered to answer its purpose, unless the street or square wherein it takes place is blocked up with carriages to the annoyance of all the neighbours. The great object of the giver of the rout appears to be, to collect such a prodigious host that one half the company must perforce remain on the staircase, or else elbow their way to the drawing-room, just as they would shove through a crowd at the pit-doors of a theatre.

N.B.—Never go to a party of this description in a new great coat or hat, for you will infallibly lose both !

The ball at the Leamington Assembly Rooms was fortunately not of this preposterous character. Though on a large scale, it was not inconveniently so, for the rooms are spacious, and were not overcrowded ; consequently no shins were broken, no ribs

smashed, and no shawls or scarf's torn off the shoulders of the wearers, in their desperate attempts to force their way among the *élite* of the assembly.

A quadrille had just been formed, when Peregrine entered, with his fair friends hanging on his arm. Hardly had he escorted them to a seat, when the quick eye of Captain Tittenhanger discovered the new-comers, and he instantly advanced towards them from out a circle of half-pays, with whom he had been cracking the usual military jokes.

The lively Betsy received him with her wonted boisterous vivacity, and lost not a moment in rallying him on his charming verses on Mrs. Edgington's eyes, which drew from that lady a very ready and becoming blush; for her bashfulness was excessive, and her nervous system deranged on the slightest occasion.

"They were indeed very sweet lines," she observed timidly, "but surely you might have found a better subject, Captain Tittenhanger."

"Impossible!" replied the gallant officer, with one of his most killing smiles.

"Oh, you men are such flatterers!" rejoined the gentle widow, "one never knows when to believe you."

"Never mind what she says, George," interposed the rattling Betsy, "she believes every word you've said."

"Oh fie, Elizabeth! How can you talk such nonsense!" and Mrs. Edgington gently patted her arm with her fan, accompanying the movement with a deprecatory shake of the head.

"You know, Fanny," resumed her lively tormentor, "you believe all that George has told you about your eyes."

"Really, Elizabeth, I shall be quite angry with you if you go on in this way.—Captain Tittenhanger, you must not mind what this mad-cap girl says."

"Oh, George knows me well—I love to tease people—it's such fun! especially when they're so very reserved as you are, Fanny, about these lines, which I'm certain you never would have shown me if you had not thought them perfectly true."

"Mrs. Edgington," observed the captain, by way of breaking off the conversation, "they're making up another quadrille—permit me to have the pleasure of dancing with you;" and so saying, he offered his arm to the fair widow, who gladly availed herself of the opportunity of getting rid of Betsy's raillery.

"There they go," said Miss Betsy to Peregrine, who took his seat by her side, "and a nice, quiet little game of flirtation they'll carry on, for Fanny, notwithstanding her demureness, is

fond of flattery, and George is one of the most accomplished flatterers I know of; but his nonsense is all lost on me, and so I tell him.—But what ails you, Mr. Bunce? You've positively not opened your mouth since you've been in the room! Are you meditating a copy of verses, too?"

"Not exactly," replied Mr. Bunce, "for unluckily I've no genius that way, though I am very fond of reading poetry."

"Well, I declare I thought you were meditating some little indiscretion of that sort, for you never once spoke or even smiled the whole time I was quizzing poor Fanny."

"Yet I was not the less amused by your graceful raillery," said Bunce.

"Graceful raillery!—Oh come, now, that's too good—why, you are as great a flatterer as George!"

Peregrine protested vehemently that nothing was further from his thoughts than the idea of paying a compliment, for he had always made it a point, whether in conversation with ladies or gentlemen, never to speak otherwise than as he felt; and having thus, as he imagined, made the required impression, he proceeded to ask his companion if she would join the dancers, to which she unhesitatingly acceded, if only, as she said, "for the fun's sake."

The reserve and gravity on which Betsy quizzed Bunce, may be soon accounted for. He was thinking within himself that he should have a more troublesome task in managing her than he had at first anticipated, for she was clearly not to be won by sentiment—and this mode of wooing came most easy to him, though he was by no means deficient in animal spirits—but was to be conciliated by a show of sympathy with her love of fun, just as Margy Minton was to be conciliated by a long face, and the twang of the conventicle. Now he was not remarkable for wit, or humour, or repartee; and this, added to the circumstance that boisterous girls were by no means to his taste, caused him to experience a momentary uneasiness, which the acute Betsy was not slow in detecting.

Betsy and her partner were both good dancers; the former, notwithstanding her high animal spirits, was anything but a romp in the quadrille, and moved with an ease, a self-possession, and even a grace, that made Peregrine say to himself more than once, "Ah, if she would but manage her tongue as well as she does her heels, she would leave nothing to be desired in a wife—always supposing she has that twenty thousand pounds which uncle Noll spoke of!"

When the quadrille was at an end, the party resumed their seats. "You must positively go and see Kenilworth before you leave Leamington, Mr. Bunce; it is quite the lion of the neighbourhood, though I am sure I cannot tell why, for I never could see anything in it—a stupid old ruin, made up of decayed brick-bats and superannuated stinging-nettles. Have you a genius for ruins?"

"Not much."

"Nor I either; but they're the fashion nowadays—at least Kenilworth is, because Sir Walter Scott wrote a tale about it, and Queen Elizabeth is said to have once slept in it."

"Not in the ruins, surely!" said Bunce, with infinite simplicity; for his literary intelligence was by no means on a par with his worldly cunning.

"How can you ask such a silly question!" replied Miss Misty;—"but I see how it is, you're quizzing me; well, I love a joke as well as any one—oh, here comes that odious Colonel Cactus!" she continued, as a stout, middle-aged gentleman approached, "now we shall have to listen to his nonsense for at least half an hour, for he's what George calls a regular button-holder."

The individual in question was exactly what Captain Tittenhanger,—or George, to use Betsy's familiar phrase—called him, that is to say, an inveterate button-holder. He was a ceremonious, military beau of the old school, squat and short-necked, with the thickest part of his face downwards, like a bee-hive. When he spoke, it was with the utmost slowness and deliberation, and he gave an emphasis to the veriest common-places, as though they were so many oracles of wisdom. His voice resembled the drowsy, unvaried hum of a cockchafer; he had a perfect horror of a joke, or anything approaching to it; he took snuff in large quantities; and by way of picturesque contrast to his red face, which was mottled like that of a north-country coachman's, he invariably wore a snow-white waistcoat.

"I hope I see Miss Elizabeth in good health this evening," commenced the gallant colonel, pressing the fair lady's hand, and bowing over it with the reverential courtesy of a Sir Charles Grandison.

"Oh, I'm always well, colonel; nothing ever ails me, you know."

"I am quite charmed to hear you say so; health, my dear young lady, is a great blessing—I may say—a very great bless-

ing ; but unfortunately we never know the value of it, until it's lost."

" That's true—I may say, very true, colonel," replied Betsy, archly repeating his own words.

" And your worthy father, Miss Misty—how is he ? "

" He's quite well, too, except that he complains of a terrible cold."

" Colds," observed the colonel, tapping his snuff-box with due deliberation, " colds are very common at this time of the year.—And your excellent mother, Miss Elizabeth, I hope she's in the enjoyment of good health."

" Why, no, colonel ; she, too, complains of a cold."

" Indeed ! That bears me out, then, in what I said just now, that colds are very common at this season."

" They are so, Colonel Cactus, for even ma's pet spaniel, Beauty, has got one, and goes wheezing about the house like a pair of bellows," replied Betsy with mock gravity.

" What an odd girl it is !" thought Peregrine ; " I wonder whether marriage will tame her !" and a momentary shade of doubt passed across his mind, which was only dispersed by a prompt consolatory recollection of her twenty thousand three per cents.

" The rooms are tolerably well filled to-night," continued Colonel Cactus, " though I see but few of my old friends here.—By the bye, Miss Elizabeth, I've just been paying my respects to Mrs. Edgington, who I perceive has got Captain Tittenhanger for a partner. You know them, I believe."

" Oh yes, Fanny is an old friend of mine, and so is George ; are you aware that George is a poet, colonel ? "

" A what ? " exclaimed the colonel, with a start of astonishment.

" A poet, as large as life," repeated Betsy, gravely.

" Bless my soul, who'd have thought it to look at him ! I'm sure I would as soon have suspected myself of being a poet."

" Well, and who knows but you are one, colonel ? "

" Me, Miss Misty ! I do most solemnly assure you that I not only never wrote a line of poetry in my life, but to the best of my recollection I never even read one. I'm a plain man, Miss Elizabeth."

" Very plain indeed," thought Betsy.

" With no earthly pretensions beyond those of mere common sense," resumed the colonel.

"Oh, you're too modest by half, Colonel Cactus."

"I feel supremely flattered by your good opinion," said the formal old beau with a grave obeisance; "have you seen the exhibition of animal magnetism yet, Miss Elizabeth? I'm told that it's very wonderful, and that those who are magnetized are made pincushions of, without their knowing it; and what's still more extraordinary, that they are put fast asleep merely by a few movements of the professor's hands."

"Oh yes, we saw the exhibition yesterday, and were nearly put fast asleep ourselves, but not so much by the hands, as by the tongue, of the professor, for a twaddler's tongue is a very efficient instrument for inducing drowsiness; don't you think so, colonel?" exclaimed Betsy, with a sarcastic expression of countenance she could not resist.

The colonel, who was too obtuse to perceive the drift of Miss Misty's remark, yet fancied there was some latent mischief in it, from the perplexed countenance of Bunce, who was obliged to turn away his head to conceal his laughter; he, however, said nothing, but after a few more pompous common-places, waddled off, with the imposing dignity of a gander, into the adjacent card-room.

"Thank God, I've got rid of him!" exclaimed Betsy, "what a providential escape! How can I ever be sufficiently grateful for it! I really began to fear that he would have bored me the whole night. Now isn't he a proser, Mr. Bunce? Did you ever see such a solemn old quiz? But I think he is afraid of me, and I'm sure I hope he is; I would give worlds if I could only get him to look on me as a sort of ogre.—Oh, here comes another—I knew I should see him before the night was out: this is Mr. Rufus Chasemore."

As she spoke, the young man approached, and Peregrine eyed him shrewdly, but with no very benign expression of face, for he was a well-looking fellow enough, of creditable address, and evidently desirous to make himself appear as interesting as possible.

"Now, Mr. Chasemore," said Betsy, attacking him the very instant he came within hail, "I can see by your manner that you have come prepared with some fine compliment, by way of ministering to my woman's vanity. But that dear old soul, the colonel, has been beforehand with you, and you cannot possibly excel him in the noble art of flattery."

"He is a fortunate man to be the object of your praise, Miss Misty. There are some," added Chasemore obsequiously, "who

would conceive it the highest possible honour to possess your good opinion."

"Some!" replied Betsy, "one, you mean; and that one yourself."

"You are right; it is indeed the height of my ambition to stand well in your regards. Who would not glory in such an honour?"

"Upon my word, you improve; now, Mr. Bunce, equal that, if you can."

"I can't," said Peregrine, with an adroit affectation of frankness and simplicity.

"What, can't you compare me to an angel? Can't you say, as Mr. Chasemore said the other evening, that there is a something in the tones of my voice, when singing, that gives you the idea of a St. Cecilia?"

"Really, Miss Misty, you are too cruel," said the perplexed Rufus.

"Dear me, I hope not," interrupted Betsy, with a look of mock solicitude, "what have I said? What have I done that can cause you anguish? Are you seriously hurt? Mr. Bunce, do you think I have inflicted any very grievous injury on this susceptible gentleman?"

"I should say," observed Peregrine, dexterously falling in with her humour, "that you had not the heart to harm a fly, and that if you were to find one half-suffocated in the sugar-basin, you would nurse it with the tenderest care, and do your utmost to restore it to respiration. How then could I think you capable of persecuting a Christian?"

"What a blessing it is to feel that one's sense of humanity is appreciated!" said Betsy, laughing; "I clearly see, Mr. Bunce, that you have a shrewd insight into character."

"Shall I get you an ice from the refreshment-room?" asked Chasemore, who did not altogether like the turn the conversation was taking.

"Oh, yes, by all means," replied Betsy, "and then I will promise to forgive you for having wantonly charged me with cruelty."

Chasemore performed his errand with praiseworthy expedition, and, as a reward for his services, was honoured with the hand of Miss Misty for the two next quadrilles; who, with the tact of a quick-witted girl, was resolved to show no preferences, but to divide her attentions equally between her two beaus.

Peregrine, meantime, amused himself by watching the pro-

ceedings in the card-room, and, having lounged away half an hour in this manner, not a little diverted by the spiteful looks which two lean, dry old tabbies were casting at each other from opposite quarters of the table, he strolled into the refreshment-room, where, with a due regard to his creature-comforts, of which, to his credit be it said, he was never negligent, he made himself as much at home as a cow in a clover-field, and did not return to the ball-room till summoned by a message from Miss Misty, who informed him that she, and George, and Fanny, were about to leave, and requested him therefore to go and look after the carriage.

Mrs. Edgington and Captain Tittenhanger were waiting in the hall for Betsy, who was putting on her cloak, bonnet, &c. in the robing-room, while Bunce was hunting after the carriage, when the following extraordinary catastrophe took place. At the top of the staircase, on his way out from the ball-room, stood Colonel Cactus, quietly buttoning up his coat, and talking the while to another elderly gentleman who stood close beside him. Now it chanced that at this critical moment, the volatile, impetuous Betsy, fearful of missing her friends among the crowd who were beginning to throng the hall, came flying like lightning out of the robing-room, the door of which opened directly on the staircase, and before she had time to stop herself, or could even see the colonel, for the lamp was just going out, she came full tilt against him with all the emphasis of a battering-ram. The shock was tremendous! Down went the gallant officer heels over head; but as in the bewilderment occasioned by such an unexpected collision, he had clung to his companion's coat-skirt for protection, instead of catching hold of the banisters, the other was also thrown off his balance, and together they plunged, like a couple of billiard-balls, to the bottom of the staircase, while Miss Betsy herself narrowly escaped a similar fall!

On recovering from her astonishment, the first objects that greeted her eyes were the two victims of her agility, looking ruefully into each other's faces, and comparing notes at the foot of the staircase. Both had lost their wigs, and their bald polished skulls, which shone like turnips, contrasted most grotesquely with their crimson countenances, which were in a perfect blaze with mingled shame, vexation, and surprise. At first she was apprehensive that they might have been seriously injured; but when assured by their manner that they were more frightened than hurt, more particularly when she saw them, after replacing their respective periwigs, look up, and stare grimly at the fair

author of their calamity, she could contain herself no longer, but burst out into such a fit of laughter, as greatly added to the confusion and perplexity of the sufferers.

Having made as good an apology to them as circumstances would admit, and been answered only by a bow of the coldest and most awful formality, she hurried to her friends, whom she found anxiously expecting her arrival at the hall door.

"Where, in heaven's name, have you been, Betsy?" asked Mrs. Edgington, "what *can* have detained you so long?"

"Egad, Betsy," observed Captain Tittenhanger, "we were beginning to think you had eloped with your old favourite, Colonel Cactus."

The mention of this name again set Betsy off into convulsions, infinitely to the surprise of all the party.

"What's the matter with you?" exclaimed Mrs. Edgington, "what is it you are laughing at? tell us, that we may enjoy the joke also."

"Ay, don't keep all the fun to yourself, but let us share it; come, out with it, there's a good girl," said Captain Tittenhanger.

"Oh, George, such an adventure! Such fun! Never saw such a comical thing in my life — thought I should have died! But I'll tell you all about it when we're in the carriage."

On the road home Miss Misty related all the circumstances connected with Colonel Cactus' and his friend's mishap, which at first, Mrs. Edgington, who had a nicer and more worldly sense of propriety than the giddy *raconteur*, treated as rather a serious matter; when, however, she observed the outrageous merriment it occasioned the rest of the party, she, too, caught the infection; and presently all four were in a state of ungovernable cachinnation. Perhaps a more boisterous quartette never quitted a provincial ball-room.

Peregrine bade adieu to Betsy at the door of her house, having been honoured by a hearty shake of the hand, for his evident enjoyment of her last adventure had quite pleased the mercurial young lady. He then walked quietly home to the Clarendon, musing by the way on his matrimonial prospects, which to his sanguine mind, unchilled by previous disappointments, seemed to be of a most encouraging character.

On entering his uncle's sitting-room, he found that gentleman seated half-asleep in his arm-chair, with the candles unsnuffed

on the table, and a newspaper, which appeared to have produced quite a narcotic effect on him, lying in his lap, while a half-finished tumbler of brandy-and-water stood conveniently at his elbow.

The noise made by the opening of the door roused the old gentleman from his lethargy, and starting up, and rubbing his eyes, he exclaimed, "Hey, who's there?—Oh, it's Peregrine—come in, Perry, take a seat, and let us hear what sort of a ball you had."

"I thought you would have been in bed long ago, uncle," said Bunce, depositing himself in a chair opposite him.

"No, no, boy—couldn't sleep—was moping, and dwelling on certain painful recollections, so though the best way to cheer my spirits would be by brewing a stiff glass or two. I rather think that turbot at dinner must have disagreed with me—but be that as it may, I'm well enough now that you're come back. Well, and how have you been entertained? and who did you dance with? and how's Betsy Misty? and what progress have you made in that quarter? Hah! all right I see—sly dog!—come, let's hear all about it!"

"I must answer one question at a time, if you please," said Bunce, smiling.

"Very good—but stop a moment; this tumbler's cold, and I'll order up another—and now I think of it, we'll have just the smallest taste in the world of supper—a grilled blade-bone, a cold fowl, or something nice of that sort. I'll warrant me you got nothing substantial at the ball—an ice, or a jelly perhaps, or some such windy kickshaw. People are so cursedly genteel nowadays, that they never eat, themselves, or allow others to eat;" and so saying, Uncle Oliver summoned the waiter, who, considering that he was half asleep, got supper ready with remarkable despatch.

Bunce, who was seldom averse to any proposal connected with eating and drinking, did all the justice to the fowl and tongue that was expected from him; and when the tray was removed, and a fresh jug of hot water, with spirits, lemons, &c., placed on the table, he acquainted his uncle with all the particulars of his conversation with Betsy, adding that her temperament was mercurial in a most extraordinary degree, and that he had the greatest possible difficulty in maintaining his own animal spirits at the proper pitch.

"Good," said his uncle, "I like what you tell me of her—a fine bouncing, good-hearted girl—a little wild just now, but sure to settle down into an exemplary wife. So stick to her, Perry—

stick close, my boy. I prefer such romps a million times over to your insincere prudes, who, after giving you encouragement, jilt you with all the coolness imaginable."

"Yes, but Miss Misty may jilt me too, and call it capital fun, for she's an uncommon odd way with her."

"No, no; girls like her do not jest on these matters, whatever they may do on others. Matrimony's no joke to them; they are earnest enough then."

"Yet I really believe it's impossible to keep Betsy in earnest for two minutes together," and Bunce then told the story of her adventure with Colonel Cactus.

Uncle Oliver laughed heartily at the details. "So she fairly knocked him down—set him rolling like a foot-ball, and another a-top of him! Excellent! I'd have given a trifle to have seen the old beau's face, when he felt for his wig, and found it had set out on its travels. His phiz must have been as long as a West-end tailor's bill. Too bad, though—too bad!"

"So the colonel thought, no doubt!"

"'Twas a most providential circumstance that the old boy pitched on his head," continued Noll, delighted with his own joke, "otherwise, he might have sustained serious damage from his fall. Of course, Perry, you'll go and call on the Mistys tomorrow."

"Certainly, for I have a sort of an engagement to go with Betsy to see Warwick Castle."

"An admirable opportunity for making progress with your suit. You can talk to her about the valiant Guy, Earl of Warwick, and the dun cow, and poetry, and romance, and all that. Play your best, and you'll win."

"I hope so, uncle!"

"Hope so! I'm sure of it; and in order that your attention may not be distracted, you shall confine yourself to the Mistys. There'll be no occasion to renew my acquaintance with the Shiversdales—never liked them—always gave me chilblains even to look at them—and as for the daughter, you might as well attempt to melt the statue of the Venus di Medicis—no thawing her heart; one might suppose she had been born at the north-pole, and suckled by an Esquimaux squaw on an iceberg—God, how cold I feel!" and the old gentleman made a brisk application to his tumbler.

He had now got into an unusually talkative mood, having been refreshed by his brief *siesta*; and as loquacity accelerates the effects of drink on the brain, he soon began to evince symp-

toms of that state of hallucination, which the experienced in such matters have agreed to call "half-seas over." He told more than one long story about his youthful gallantries, representing himself—as elderly gentlemen are apt to do, when once they have embarked on such a tempting theme—as invariably successful with the women ; and one anecdote, in particular, respecting a small affair with a buxom Bath chambermaid, he told not less than twice over, removing the *venue*, however, on the second repetition, to Bristol, and pointing the narrative with sundry sly, knowing nods and winks, which so surprised and diverted Peregrine, that, despite his proverbial discretion, he had the greatest possible difficulty in keeping his countenance.

Never, indeed, had the nephew seen his respected uncle in so frolicsome a mood. To use a homely, but expressive phrase, he was "fuddled"—that is to say, admirably qualified to take the chair at a Temperance Society—and after cracking a variety of jokes, and humming the butt-end of two or three of Captain Morris's convivial songs, he planned circumstantially the whole affair of Peregrine's marriage with Betsy—how it was to be brought about—where it was to come off—when it was to take place ; and kept repeating over and over again, "Persevere, boy, persevere ; never mind the girl's quizzical humour ; if she quizzes you, quiz her again, and rely on it, you'll soon succeed in quizzing her into matrimony. But above all, don't despair. Faint heart never won fair lady, as my old chum, Jack Baggs, observed, when I confided to him my little affair with the Bath chambermaid. Did I ever tell you that story ? "

" You told it me, uncle, not half an hour since."

" What about the merry black-eyed chambermaid—Nancy, I think her name was—at Bristol ? "

" Yes, and how she told you that you were born to turn the heads of young innocent unprotected girls like herself."

" So she did—so she did," replied the old gentleman, chuckling with infinite self-complacency, "and a shrewd judge of character she was.—Ah, those days of pleasant folly are past now ; well, here's to their memory!" and he again applied for consolation to his tumbler.

Taking advantage of his uncle's genial and communicative mood, the shrewd nephew, who was never so much carried away by social impulses as to be inattentive to his own interests, but who may be said to have even slept with one eye open, once more reverted, with exquisite tact, to his deficiencies in point of fortune, and the delicate condition in which he should be placed,

when questioned by Mr. Misty on the momentous matter of settlements.

"Don't trouble your head about that—leave all to me," said the generous, social old fellow; "as I told you before, I'll take care of the main chance for you; and 'tis easier for me to do it now, than it would have been a month ago, for since the death of my poor maiden aunt——"

"Your aunt, uncle?" exclaimed Peregrine, hastily, for in the surprise of the moment he had lost sight of his usual tact, "your aunt? Dear me, how old she must have been!"

"Not so old, lad—not so old," replied Oliver Bunce somewhat pettishly; "she was certainly no chicken, but seventy-six is no such great age! At sixty, you know, a man is hardly past his prime—at least, I never felt stronger or more active than I do now. However, old or young, I've lost her now, poor soul, and the allowance I made her, reverts back again to me; and this sum, with a trifle in addition"—Peregrine was all attention—"I shall bestow on you when once I see you advantageously married;—but, mark me, not till then, for I've no notion of wasting my money on spendthrift young bachelors."

"So!" thought Peregrine, when he had duly thanked his uncle for his intended generosity, "this, then, is the poor relation about whom my worthy kinsman made so much mystery!—This is the secret of his suit of sables, and his frequent visits to and from London!"

"Ah!" said Oliver Bunce, misinterpreting what was passing through his precious nephew's brain, "you sympathize with me—I see you do, by your silence; well, that's kind of you. She was an excellent creature, that aunt of mine, and so grateful for any little attentions shown her! I miss her sadly, though frequently I did not see her for weeks together. However, grieving is no good; we must all die one time or other; but you know that, I dare say, as well as I can tell you. And to think that she should have popped off at seventy-six! Only seventy-six!—when here am I, not so *very* much younger, as hearty as a buck! Very odd! Well, it can't be helped; they'll miss her cruelly though at the house where she lodged, for she was a capital hand at a rubber;" and the old gentleman kept maundering thus, half in soliloquy, and half to his nephew, till at length, being nearly overcome by sleep and sentiment, he was prevailed on by Peregrine to seek the repose of his dormitory, to which he ascended at a somewhat irregular pace, the flat candlestick swaying to and fro in his unsteady hand.

Now it came to pass, that about half an hour after the elder Bunce had retired to his bed-room, and while Peregrine, who had not yet undressed, was musing on the events of the day, that a loud scream was heard, proceeding apparently from the floor beneath him. In his first alarm, he imagined that his uncle, who slept in one of the chambers on that floor, was taken with some sudden fit or other; but on listening more attentively, he became convinced that the tones were those of a female, who kept bawling at the top of her voice, "Help! Help!—Thieves!—Fire!—Murder!"

These screams, which were accompanied by a vigorous and incessant application to the bell-rope, soon roused the whole hotel, and presently landlord, chambermaids, waiters, &c., some with, and some without, nightcaps, the women with their gowns and petticoats flung awkwardly on them, as if with a pitch-fork, and the men with their small-clothes put on hind-part foremost, which added greatly to the picturesqueness of their *impromptu* costume, came hurrying confusedly, one after the other, in the direction whence the sounds proceeded.

Peregrine was the first to enter the apartment, and there, to his inexpressible astonishment, he beheld his uncle, whom the shock of this discovery had completely sobered, standing beside a bed, half concealed by the curtains, and apparellled only in his shirt and drawers; while seated bolt upright in the bed, was a lean, elderly, vinegar-faced spinster, giving serious indications of a swoon!

"Why, uncle!" said Bunce, making a desperate effort to maintain his gravity, "what is the matter?"

"Matter?" exclaimed the aggrieved fair one, who, now that protection was at hand, had recovered from her delicate apprehensions, "why, murder—robbery—and God knows what besides—is the matter! This monster has had the audacity to intrude himself into my chamber, evidently with a felonious intent; and if I had not waked just in time, there is no knowing what might have happened! Take him away, sir—take him away, or I shall faint.—How *could* I have been so thoughtless as to forget to lock and bolt the door!—Mercy on me, what an escape I have had!" and so saying, she dived precipitately beneath the bed-clothes, as if shocked at the presence of so many strangers.

During all this time uncle Oliver said nothing, but kept himself as much out of sight as possible; while the landlord, putting on a grave face, strangely contrasting with the broad grins of his household, said, "A very ugly business, indeed! I don't half

like it ; I'm sure, sir," addressing Peregrine, "I never thought the gentleman behind the bed-curtains would have acted in this manner, so respectable as I always considered him ! "

"I beg ten thousand pardons," exclaimed Oliver Bunce in a subdued, deprecating tone, "for I perceive that I have made a most unfortunate mistake. The truth is, instead of turning to the right hand, as I ought to have done, I have turned to the left, and entered the wrong room ; and as my candle went out just as I was opening the door, I did not discover my error, till roused to recollection by this lady's screams. I trust, madam, that this explanation will relieve you from all further alarm, and that you will charitably overlook what was merely the result of inadvertence."

"I trust it is as you say, sir," said a faint voice from beneath the bed-clothes, in answer to the one from behind the bed-curtains.

"Rely on it, ma'am," observed the landlord, "it is a mere mistake, as the gentleman says. I know him to be most respectable, and I am quite sure he would never think of wantonly insulting a lady ;" and with these words he retired, accompanied by his household and Peregrine, and closely followed by Oliver Bunce, who sneaked into his own room, with his breeches hanging on his arm, after the old Highland fashion.

"Betty," whispered one of the waiters to a chambermaid, as they were returning to their separate apartments ; "mark my words, that ere is no mistake ! If ever there was a wicked 'un, it's the old gentleman as stuck himself behind the bed-curtains. He's a fox, Betty—a sly fox, with an uncommon liquorish tooth in his head ;" and the speaker laid his forefinger beside his nose, with an air of shrewd significance.

"For shame, John," replied the simpering chambermaid, "how can you go on so ?"

"I nose what I nose," rejoined the sceptical waiter : "didn't I hear that old fox, when I brought him up a jug of hot water after supper, tell his nevey as how he had touzled and tumbled a chambermaid at Bath, and another at Bristol? And didn't I see his nevey look, as if he knew all about it? Betty, Betty, if old fellows like he can play tricks with chambermaids, they can play tricks with other women, too ! "

"Play tricks with chambermaids indeed !" said Betty, bridling up ; "I should like to see him at it—a conceited, ugly old brute! But he knows better than that—I'd scratch his eyes out, if he were to attempt any of his nonsense with me :" saying

which, the indignant damsel burst into her room, and bolted the door with an energy that showed how severe was the shock her sense of decorum had received.

All was once again silent throughout the hotel, and Peregrine, after giving hearty vent to the laughter which he had till now suppressed, and picturing to himself the ridiculous figure of his uncle; as he stood with a face of exquisite sheepishness, half-concealed by the protecting dimity, sought with aching sides the repose of his couch, and was soon buried in profound sleep.

But his dreams, what were they? Not of Oliver Bunce, and his unsophisticated costume—not of the affrighted old spinster shrinking from the sight of the bloodthirsty monster behind her bed-curtains—but of Betsy Misty, and her handsome dowry! He dreamed that he was standing beside her at the altar, and that the parson, calm and happy in the anticipation of his wedding-fees, was about to join their hands, when just at that moment the sound of a key-bugle was heard, and presently the odious Captain M'Larrup made his appearance, and walking straight up to the altar, forbade the ceremony to continue; while the bride, after first laughing and crying out “what fun!” swooned away into the sympathizing arms of a fat clerk, with a red face and black shorts.

“That damned key-bugle!” said Peregrine, starting up in a cold perspiration, “I know it will be my ruin.”

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## CHAPTER XXIV

WHEN the uncle and nephew met next morning at breakfast, the former looked not a little embarrassed, remembering his last night's adventure, and after a few prefatory hemps, observed, “It is astonishing what a dizzy and bewildering effect indigestion always produces on my poor brain. I'm sure it must have been that turbot for dinner which disagreed with me; and if it had not been for the brandy-and-water, which always relieves me when taken in moderation, I must have been quite stupefied.”

Peregrine thought that it was not the turbot, but the brandy-and-water, which had occasioned his uncle's bewilderment, but he was too discreet to give expression to his thoughts.

“And yet, Perry,” continued Oliver Bunce, “though you

must have observed how temperate I was in my potations, the waiter looked at me this morning just as if he thought I had been fuddled ! ”

“ Oh dear, no, uncle ! You must have been mistaken—no one with a grain of sense or observation could possibly have come to such an absurd conclusion.”

“ One would think not ; but waiters, Perry, waiters in general are great fools, and I know not that I ever met with one who in the slightest degree reminded me of Solomon.—However, it is no use dwelling on unpleasant matters, so let us drop the subject. What do you propose doing with yourself to-day ? ”

“ I thought of looking in at the Mistys ; for it is but civil, you know, to call and inquire how Betsy is, after the fatigues of the ball.”

“ Right ; civility is due to every one.”

“ And costs nothing,” thought Peregrine, which is its great recommendation, adding aloud, “ Besides, uncle, as I told you last night, I have a sort of engagement to accompany Betsy to Warwick Castle.”

“ Lord bless me, I forgot all about that ! —So you did tell me—but that horrid turbot quite put it out of my head—I will never again have a turbot for dinner, never. Well, as that’s the case, the sooner you fulfil your engagement the better—nothing like taking time by the forelock, in love as well as war.”

“ And how will you amuse yourself, supposing I should not be back to dinner ? ”

“ Not in eating turbot, you may be sure, Perry.”

“ It looks so selfish to leave you all alone, uncle,” resumed Peregrine with a hypocritical whine.

“ Oh, never mind me, my boy, I’ll find some way of amusing myself. I can look in at the billiard-rooms, and have a chat with the first person I meet there ; or stare in at the shops, flattening my nose against the window-pane ; or, catch old Colonel Cactus by the button, and fix him with a long story—hah ! hah ! —or go down into the coffee-room and spell all the advertisements in the double sheet of the *Times* :—never mind me : I dare say I shall find some way or other to kill time till you return ; and if the worst comes to the worst, why, I can but go and pay my respects to the Shiversdales ; ” and here he made a wry face, as if he were swallowing physic.

“ Well, uncle, since you are so pressing, I’ll be off without loss of time,” and, breakfast being concluded, he hastened upstairs to complete his toilet.

On his way to the Mistys, he caught sight of Rufus Chase-more, who, as if he knew whither he was bound, looked at him as vicious as a hyæna. Peregrine, however, took no notice of his black looks, but quietly continued his course, drawing even from the hostility of his rival the materials of satisfaction and hope.

It was a brisk, sunshiny day, and all Leamington seemed to be out in the open air. The shops were crowded with ladies, examining everything, and purchasing nothing ; carriages were rattling along the streets, with fat lap-dogs staring out at the windows ; and under the portico of one of the principal hotels, stood a group of military dandies, some tapping their boots indolently with their canes, and others carefully settling the arrangement of their moustachios, well knowing what a killing effect a well-regulated moustachio has on a susceptible young lady at a watering-place.

In due time Peregrine reached the Mistys, and found the old gentleman with his hat and umbrella in his hand, just preparing to go out, and his wife sitting, as usual, a perfect picture of still-life, behind her work-box, on a sofa, which was strewed with sundry odds and ends of tapes, muslins, lace, &c.

Mrs. Misty just languidly raised her head as Peregrine entered, and then went on with her work ; while her husband, after requesting him to take a chair, stated that he was under the necessity of attending a charity meeting, at which he had promised to move the first resolution. "And that reminds me," he added, "that I have not yet sent you my speech—I mean the one I made the other day at the anniversary dinner of the Lying-in Institution, which Colonel Cactus thought so highly of. But I shall not forget you, Mr. Bunce ; it will be out very shortly, and then you shall have one of the earliest copies. It cannot be in better hands, for I'm persuaded you're a judge of these things ; I would send one to your uncle, also, but if I mistake not, he has no great taste for public speeches, so the compliment would be thrown away on him. By the bye, I may probably look in on him at the Clarendon as I return, and see if I cannot prevail on him to make up a rubber this evening.—Adieu, Mr. Bunce—Excuse my leaving you so abruptly, but business must be minded, you know."

Left alone with Mrs. Misty, Peregrine instantly set about making inquiries after her daughter, and was specially desirous to know whether she had recovered from the fatigues of the preceding evening.

"I'm sure I haven't an idea," replied her lethargic parent, "but she will be here immediately to answer for herself;" and as she spoke, in came Betsy, and, running up to Peregrine, shook him cordially by the hand, and in reply to his congratulations on her good looks, observed that it was impossible she should be otherwise than well, when she thought of the "capital fun" she had had at the ball, which had kept her laughing all night. "Ma," she added, "you know we are to take Mr. Bunce with us in the carriage to-day to see Warwick Castle."

"Are we, my dear? Very well," replied the philosophic dame.

Betsy and Peregrine continued chatting on a variety of subjects for nearly an hour, Mrs. Misty now and then interposing a brief word or two, when luncheon was brought in; and at its conclusion, the ladies went upstairs to dress; and, this important duty accomplished, the whole party took their seats in the carriage, which rolled away, not "at that steady and majestic pace, which"—as the immortal historian of the Lord Mayor's Voyage to Oxford has assured us—"is always an indication of real greatness," but at a brisk trot, which was more in accordance with Miss Misty's ideas of locomotion.

As a matter of course, Peregrine professed himself highly delighted with Warwick Castle, though it was with difficulty he suppressed a yawn as he traversed its noble suite of state-rooms, and listened to the explanations of his Cicerone—an old privileged domestic, who stuck to him as tenaciously as a horse-leech, gratified with the admirable qualifications he displayed as a listener, and lengthening her narratives in exact proportion to his expression of delight and wonder.

Having seen all that was to be seen, the party returned home—as watering-place sight-seers usually do—just about as wise as they went; and in the evening, Peregrine dropped in at the Mistys with his uncle, and while the old folks played a quiet rubber, the young ones amused themselves with chatting and turning over books of prints; and from Betsy's frequent laugh, it was evident that her companion's conversation afforded her no slight entertainment.

So passed three weeks, at the end of which time Oliver Bunce began to talk of returning home, hinting also, that if Peregrine intended to "pop"—to use his favourite phrase—the sooner he popped the better, more especially as the girl appeared to like him; and such being the case, she would be perfectly prepared to receive his delicate communication.

"Carry her by storm at once, and don't stand shilly-shallying," said the elder Bunce, "for I'm sick of all these delays. 'Happy's the wooing that's not long a-doing,' as the old song says. Remember, I've been staying here at Leamington entirely for your sake all this time, and now I tell you plainly, that unless it be to arrange the business part of this affair with old Misty, I will not remain here three days longer. To-day is Tuesday—on Friday next I'm off for London."

Struck by the unwonted firmness and decision of his good-natured uncle's manner, Peregrine made up his mind—though not without an effort, for he feared the consequences of precipitation—to bring matters to a crisis. He had promised to take a walk with Betsy and her mother that day; and if he could but prevail on the old lady to stay at home, on some plausible pretext or other, he felt that he could not have a better opportunity of popping the question.

Everything succeeded to his wish, Mrs. Misty was in one of her usual languid, vacillating moods; she would go out, and she would not; it threatened rain, and she might get wet, and whenever she got wet, she always got a cold: so the upshot was, that she resolved to stay at home, and Peregrine and Betsy set out without her.

They talked on various indifferent matters, till they had quitted the town, and advanced into the open country, when, insensibly, Peregrine's conversation assumed a more earnest tone than was usual with him. As for Betsy, strange to say, she made few or no remarks, but seemed to be weighing carefully all that her companion said, and, for once in her life, did not indulge in a jocular vein.

Interpreting this unaccustomed seriousness on her part into a favourable omen, Peregrine went on in impassioned terms to enlarge on the happiness of wedded life, when the temper, tastes, &c. of husband and wife were congenial. He would have quoted poetry in support of his observations, but unluckily the only rhymes he could remember, were, "Thirty days hath September;" and as this matter-of-fact distich did not suit the sentimental theme on which he was now expatiating, he contented himself with talking plain prose.

"Speaking of marriage," observed Miss Misty, as they proceeded on their walk, "I must introduce you to some young friends of mine, Mr. Bunce, who only arrived here yesterday, and who fully realize all your exalted notions of domestic life.

I'm sure you'll like them, for they have all that delicacy of feeling and disinterestedness of character which you profess so much to admire."

Simple as these words were, there was a certain something in the manner in which they were said, that gave the fortune-hunter considerable uneasiness. Yet why should he be apprehensive? Could Betsy have no young friends but the Towseys, or the M'Larrups? Was it at all likely that *they* were the new-comers? Impossible! It was merely his refined sensitiveness that took the alarm; thus he consoled himself, and was proceeding to express the great pleasure he should feel in being introduced to any friends of Miss Misty, when she cut short his eloquence by observing, "Yes, Mr. Bunce, I'm convinced you'll like them, for they are young, lively, affectionate, domestic—in fact, all that married people should be—so different from the Rufus Chasemores, and those sordid but plausible fortune-hunters, who are always to be met with at watering-places, and who never seek to ascertain what a woman *is*, provided they be satisfied with what she *has*! I'm positive you must hate and despise adventurers of this class,—don't you now?" and she looked him earnestly in the face.

"Oh, certainly, the wretches!" replied Bunce, with intrepid effrontery.

"By the way," continued Betsy, "this young married friend of mine,—I allude to the lady—was some short time ago very nearly entangled in the clutches of one of these clever schemers, who had contrived to blind her as to his real character, and to make something like an impression on her inexperienced heart. Luckily, she found him out in time, for he betrayed the cloven foot sooner than could have been anticipated from his known shrewdness. She was an old schoolfellow of mine at Hammersmith, and as we have continued to correspond ever since, and she never had a secret from me, she acquainted me with her *penchant* for this gentleman, and the abrupt termination of the intimacy; but never till last night did she tell me his name; and even this I wrung from her with difficulty, for, as you may imagine, she felt a natural reluctance to confess how egregiously she had been deceived in her estimate of character. However, she is now happily married, and has come down here for a month with her husband, and two other friends. I'm sure you'll be glad to know her."

"I shall be proud indeed to make her acquaintance," exclaimed Bunce, in a faltering tone of voice; "but may I ask," he added,

with a desperate determination to know the worst, "the name of this scheming adventurer?"

"Assuredly, but of course you'll be generous enough to keep a lady's secret."

"Can you doubt me?" replied Peregrine, much relieved.

"Well, then, his name—but, remember, it must be a profound secret—his name is, Peregrine Bunce!!"

"How?—What?—Me?" said the detected fortune-hunter, turning as pale as ashes, while silently Miss Misty withdrew her arm from his. "Whoever has told you a story of this sort, Miss Misty, has told an egregious falsehood. I never was a fortune-hunter. I am a gentleman in independent circumstances, and my nearest surviving relation is one of your father's oldest friends. As regards the case to which you have alluded, there were certain unfortunate peculiarities attending it, which—which—in short, I could not have acted otherwise than I did, in that affair."

"Mr. Bunce," replied Betsy, with more earnestness than she had ever yet shown, or than he had ever thought her capable of, "I am neither your judge nor your accuser; but there are those now in Leamington who will corroborate all the facts I have stated, and more, perhaps, than you would wish me to mention. Are you acquainted with the Towseys and the M'Larrups?"

"I once had that pleasure, but events occurred of so painful—so unexpected a nature, that—that—the acquaintance was dropped, as a matter of course!"

"Then their residence here will be probably disagreeable to you, and as I dare say you will like, least of all, to meet them at our house, where they will always be welcome guests, permit me to hint at the expediency"—and here Betsy repeated almost the very words that Dory Minton had used, on a somewhat similar occasion—"of your discontinuing your visits henceforth. It is painful to speak thus, Mr. Bunce; but it is better that the advice should come from me than from my father, who, despite his oddities, is of a generous nature, and very apt to blurt out ungracious truths. Excuse my frankness, sir, and give me credit for some serious feelings, even though you have hitherto known me only as a laughing giddy girl."

As Betsy spoke thus, she looked almost handsome, and there was a dignity in her manner that quite astonished Peregrine.

"It is all over!" he said to himself, yet he resolved to make

one more appeal. "Miss Misty," he exclaimed, "hear me, before you condemn. I am unfortunate, but not mercenary or selfish."

"As I said before, sir," observed Betsy, interrupting him, "I am neither your judge nor your accuser; but as you seem anxious to enter into explanations, here come the very people who will be able to assist you in your task! Perhaps, therefore, you had better delay your communications till they come up."

Bunce looked in the direction in which Miss Misty pointed, and there, crossing a field that was bounded by the high-road, whom should he see but Captain and Mrs. M'Larrup! An instant, and the detested key-bugle rung in his ear the death-knell of all his hopes!

'Twas mean—'twas cowardly to retreat; but Bunce was not encumbered with generous impulses; besides, what could he do? —How explain what bid defiance to all satisfactory explanation? Flight was his only resource; so, after stammering out a hasty adieu to Miss Misty, who, he observed, would not now need his escort; and assigning as a reason for his abrupt departure, his inability to trust himself in the presence of his bitterest enemies, in the present excited state of his feelings, he hurried towards the town in a frame of mind which—to quote the eloquent language of George Robins—"may be easier imagined than described."

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## CHAPTER XXV

BUNCE hurried on at his briskest pace, till he was fairly out of sight of Betsy and the M'Larrups, when he slackened his speed, and began seriously to ponder on his embarrassing position, and the means by which he should extricate himself. "That detestable M'Larrup!"—'twas thus ran the current of his meditations,—"my dream was true, and his key-bugle has indeed rung the death-knell of my hopes. And the Towsseys, too! To think that Maria should for years have corresponded with Miss Misty, and I know nothing of the fact till now. And then to find her and her husband here at Leamington, of all places in the world, making their appearance just at the crisis of my fate! Assuredly I am the most unlucky dog on earth, and the laws of ordinary probability are all set at nought, in order to

bring about my ruin. Nothing goes right with me, but everything is at sixes and sevens. Never—never again can I show my face here in company, for the Nobbatop episode will of course get wind, and I shall at once be scouted as a mere fortune-hunter. What an extraordinary change has the last twelve hours wrought in my fortunes! This morning, twenty thousand *three per cents* seemed actually within my grasp,—to be had for the bare asking; and now, the golden prize is for ever beyond my reach!" And as this last thought flashed across his brain, spleen got the better of sentiment, and he anathematized the "eyes" of Miss Misty with a terse, homely energy, that would have quite horrified the poetic Tittenhanger.

The next painful reflection that suggested itself to Peregrine, was his position as regarded Uncle Oliver. How was he to explain away this last awkward rencontre with the M'Larrups?—how account for his so abruptly breaking off all connection with the Mistys? Would his uncle, who had been so often put off with lame statements and half-truths on the subject of his matrimonial mishaps, rest satisfied with a mere vague explanation? Would he not rather begin to question his sincerity, and think that he had purposely kept back the most important items in the affair? And, thus suspecting, would he not go himself to the Mistys, and demand a full and particular account of the transaction? This idea quite horrified Bunce. He knew that his uncle, who was quite a gentleman in his feelings, and credulous up to a certain point, would never forgive him, should he find out that he had been playing on his credulity; that though easy, good-natured, and somewhat indolent, he had yet stern and decided points in his character, and that nothing so enraged him, or rendered him so inexorable, as meanness and duplicity.

Under these circumstances, how should Peregrine act? 'Twas a perplexing question; and the only conclusion he could come to was, that it was best to act as he had done before on similar occasions—that is to say, state the truth, but not the whole truth, but merely so much as might suit his purposes; and then—under the pretext that his sensitive feelings rendered Leamington hateful to him—hurry his uncle off to London on the morrow. If he could accomplish this, he felt that he might yet be safe; but if the old gentleman once had an interview with the Mistys, he knew him too well to be able to reckon any longer on his friendship.

Having come to this determination, he again mended his pace,

and sneaked, like a convicted culprit, through the streets, shunning every eye, and ardently hoping that he might reach the Clarendon unobserved.

Whenever a man is in a desperate hurry, it almost invariably happens that some vexatious obstacle or other occurs to delay his progress. If he be going—say to his banker's—and has not a minute to spare, he may calculate to a dead certainty that a waggon and eight horses will make a point of blocking up the street, at the very spot where he is about to cross it, so that he will reach the bank just five minutes after it is closed for the day! In like manner, if he be particularly anxious to escape observation, from the circumstance of his being dressed with unusual negligence, and having forgotten, perhaps, to shave, he may make sure of being recognized by all those more formal and precise acquaintances whom he woud most wish to avoid! Thus it happened with Peregrine on the present occasion. Because he was anxious to reach home undetected by any of his Leamington friends, being in no mood for conversation, the very first person he encountered was that inveterate button-holder Colonel Cactus, who even crossed over from the opposite side of the street, for the express purpose of fixing him!

"Mr. Bunce," said the colonel, holding forth his ungloved right hand, "I am most happy to see you, and apparently in the enjoyment of excellent health. How is your worthy uncle, sir?"

"Pretty well," replied Peregrine, coolly and tersely.

"He wears well, Mr. Bunce; indeed, considering his years—I say, considering his years, sir, for age makes a great difference in looks—I know no one who wears so well. And what have you been doing with yourself this fine day? Walking with the young ladies, hey?" And the speaker made a faint attempt at a smile.

Annoyed at this *mal-à-propos* remark, Bunce, thinking to annoy the colonel in return, said, spitefully, "I hope, Colonel Cactus, you have quite recovered the effects of your accident at the ball. When I heard of it, I became quite uneasy, fearing it might be attended with serious consequences at your time of life."

"Mr. Bunce," replied the colonel, with infinite gravity, "that accident, as you are pleased to call it, is, without exception, the most extraordinary I ever met with—so extraordinary, sir, that even to this day I am puzzled to account for it. Would

you believe it, sir, I was standing at the head of the stairs, right under a chandelier, so that it was next to impossible not to see me, when suddenly Miss Misty came butting against me like a goat, and before I knew where I was, knocked me down—fairly knocked me down, Mr. Bunce! It is the first time I was ever knocked down by a lady, and I think I may venture to add, it will be the last. Whether it was the result of design or accident, I cannot pretend to say—let us hope it was the latter, for a joke is a joke, sir; but to be pitched neck and heels down stairs, when one is in the midst of an argument with a friend, is, in my humble opinion—I say, in my humble opinion, Mr. Bunce—anything but a joke; at least, I cannot see the drollery of it."

Nearly two thousand years ago, the most lively and social of the Latin poets, Horace, described the sufferings he underwent from the prosy conversation of a bore whom he accidentally met in the Via Sacra—one of the fashionable promenades of Rome; and the description applies with singular appositeness to the sufferings Bunce endured at the hands of his persecutor, Colonel Cactus. He made many efforts to rid himself of his prolix acquaintance, by rigidly confining himself to curt monosyllabic answers to his various remarks about the weather, the races, the fashionable arrivals and departures, &c.; and at last only accomplished his deliverance by taking out his watch, and abruptly moving off, on the plea that he had one or two visits to pay, which must be paid without loss of time.

But, alas! Peregrine got out of the fryingpan only to fall into the fire; for no sooner had he shaken off Colonel Cactus, than he stumbled up against old Misty, just a few doors off the Clarendon!

He tried hard to avoid being recognized; but it wouldn't do; for the old fellow was bent on having a chat with him, and said, in his most imposing manner, "Happy to see you, my young friend; I have just been to call on your uncle, who is unquestionably a sensible man, and knows the world; but, between you and me, he has got some very queer crotchetts in his head; for when I gave him a copy of my speech, which is only just out, and, as a mark of special regard, wrote, 'with the author's compliments,' in the title-page, he thanked me for it, it is true, but immediately added, that these things were out of his way—that he had no fancy either for making or reading speeches,—and that in nine cases out of ten, it was his firm belief that speechifying was mere humbug. You think differ-

ently, I know ; and therefore I have left a copy for you also, and shall be happy to have the benefit of your opinions."

Bunce made such a random answer—for the presence of Misty painfully reminded him of his daughter—that the would-be orator, who in general was not among the most observant of men, said to himself, as he bade him adieu, "I may be mistaken, but study, or business, or something of the sort, has injured that young man's brain, for he looked at me in a very strange manner when I talked about my printed speech, and thanked me for the copy in—I must say—a most ungracious fashion. Well, one of these evenings I will try the soundness of my conjecture, by reading to him my Hints on Emigration."

Peregrine reached the Clarendon without any further interruptions, where he found Oliver Bunce momentarily expecting his arrival. "Better late than never, Perry," said he; "and what luck? Has Betsy capitulated—surrendered at discretion—or am I to be kept waiting here, till it pleases her to come to a decision?"

"We can leave Leamington, uncle, as soon as you please, and the sooner the better."

"Heyday! What's in the wind now? Why, you were quite horrified at the idea of my leaving, this morning! Has anything unpleasant occurred to cause this sudden change?"

"Yes, I have been treated in a most unexpected manner," was Peregrine's vague reply.

"Got your ears boxed, hey?—Betsy's full of her fun, you know."

"I wish that was the worst; but Maria Grayson, now Mrs. Towsey, has arrived, together with the M'Larrups; and Miss Misty, having of course been duly informed of my failure in both these quarters, has very coolly set me down as a mere fortune-hunter—a Rufus Chasemore—and as such, formally given me my dismissal."

"Stuff and nonsense! you are too sensitive by half."

"Sensitive!" replied Peregrine, hastily; "it's high time to be sensitive when a man is flatly told by a lady that he is a mercenary adventurer."

"Impossible! What can the Towseys or the M'Larrups have told Betsy to your discredit?"

"Nothing, if they adhered strictly to truth; but you know, uncle, what an ingenious way some women have of confounding truth with falsehood. A plausible case was made out against me,

and the consequence was, that Miss Misty would not hear me say a word in my defence."

"Then, by God, she shall hear me!" said Uncle Oliver, with a generous burst of emotion,—"ay, and her old fool of a father too, who has been here, boring me to death about some stupid pamphlet or other. A young fellow's character shall not be lied away in this manner. You've done nothing you need be ashamed of, Perry, so I'll stand your friend with the Mistys. I warrant me, we'll soon bring Betsy to a right way of thinking."

"Uncle Oliver," exclaimed Peregrine, turning quite pale with apprehension, "I beg—I entreat you not to interfere in this matter. Consider my feelings——"

"Consider the devil! I'll consider nothing but how to see you righted."

"But I have no wish to be righted, for——"

"But you shall be righted; I've said it, and I'll stick to it."

"My dear uncle," observed Peregrine, anxiously, "if you really wish to serve me, you'll take no further steps in this matter. Miss Misty has dismissed me; the act was voluntary on her part, and I have too much pride and self-respect to renew our intercourse under any circumstances. She may entertain just what opinion she pleases of me, for I'm quite indifferent on the subject, and feel satisfied that, with one so capricious and distrustful, I could never be happy."

"Hold your tongue, Perry; you're a fool—I told you so once before, and I tell you so again. Pride and self-respect, indeed! Tut, tut, lad—twenty thousand pounds must not be sacrificed to your mock-heroics. I'm a man of the world, and view these matters in a clearer light than you do."

"But I no longer take any interest in Miss Misty, uncle."

"But I say you do, boy; you love her better than ever. Now don't shake your head in that ridiculous fashion: your agitation—the very tones of your voice—convince me of the sincerity of your affection. Where's my hat?"—And, despite all the opposition his nephew could offer, away went the sturdy and indignant Oliver, firmly resolved, as he bluntly observed, to "have it out" with Betsy.

As the door closed behind him, Peregrine felt too truly that his last faint glimmering of hope was extinguished. His complicated web of artifice was now about to be unravelled—his real character exposed. "What a cursed unlucky day!" he kept repeating to himself, as he paced the room with rapid

strides : “two exposures within twelve hours !—one with Betsy —one with my uncle—and a lasting rupture with both ! Those damned women ! They were born to be my ruin. I never yet got into a scrape, that a petticoat was not at the bottom of it ; and now they have blasted all my prospects by setting me at loggerheads with that officious old uncle of mine !” And he gnashed his teeth and struck his forehead in a transport of rage and vexation.

Two hours elapsed—two tedious, cheerless hours, which to Peregrine’s tortured mind seemed an absolute eternity. How fervently he hoped that the chapter of accidents would come to his relief—that the whole existing dynasty of the Mistys might be invisible when Uncle Oliver called ; that the lively Betsy might be laid up with a sprained ankle, from vaulting over a five-barred gate to the sound of McLarrup’s key-bugle ; that her respected mother might be labouring under a cold of more than ordinary severity ; and her father be again holding forth at the Lying-in Institution, to the delight and astonishment of all who heard him ! But there was no such luck for the doomed fortune-hunter, who sullenly, and with his mind prepared for the worst, awaited his uncle’s return.

Another half-hour passed ; at length a heavy step ascended the stairs, the door opened—and in stalked Oliver Bunce. Never had Peregrine seen his countenance wear such an expression ! The frankness and good-nature that formed its principal charm were gone ; and there was a firmness and decision in the compressed lips, a sternness in the knit brows and flashing eyes, that took his wretched nephew by surprise, prepared as he was for an explosion. He cast one hurried glance at the old man, as he quietly took his seat, and in that one glance read his destiny.

“Young man,” said Uncle Oliver, with a stern but calm demeanour that denoted an inexorable determination of purpose, “I have seen Miss Misty, and am no longer at a loss to understand why you were so anxious that I should hold no communication with her. Your mean, ungenerous behaviour to Margy Minton and her sister ; and what, if possible, is still worse, your desertion of Maria Grayson, at the instant you were informed of the misfortunes of the Nobbatops ;—all this is known to me. Betsy—generous girl!—would fain have shielded you, not wishing you to suffer in my estimation ; but my suspicions being once awakened, I was resolved to be satisfied to the fullest extent, and, step by step, wrung the whole truth from her, as it

was disclosed to her by the M'Larrups and the Towseys. I say nothing of the duplicity you have shown in all your communications with me, and the artful manner in which you have played upon the easy credulousness of my nature ; but never—never, to the longest day of my life, will I acknowledge as a relation, or even as an associate, the man who could be guilty of such black ingratitude as you have shown towards your benefactors, the Nobbatops, and who could desert an innocent, affectionate, confiding girl—the girl, too, of your own free choice—at a time when her very misfortunes should have rendered her doubly dear to you ! Mr. Peregrine Bunce, I wish you no harm ; I have no intention to reproach you ; but henceforth, young man, we are strangers to each other ! Not a word, sir ; my mind is made up, and no power on earth can or shall alter my determination. I could forgive extravagance—I could find an excuse even for profligacy—but I cannot tolerate meanness. There is a something in the crawling, reptile, dastardly character of your proceedings, that I shrink from with absolute loathing ; and could I consent to hold further intercourse with you—knowing what I now know—I should consider myself as fitting an object of contempt as yourself."

As the fine-hearted old man ceased speaking, his cringing nephew was actually about to fall on his knees, and implore his forgiveness ; when the other, who observed his movements, turned on him a look of such lofty scorn, that, stung to the quick, and satisfied that there was no longer a hope, Peregrine at once threw off the sycophant, and observed, in a spirit of vulgar bluster, " Since I find you so inveterately prejudiced against me that you will not hear a word I have to say in my defence, I shall content myself with assuring you that I do not care two straws for your bad or good opinion. I know you think you have crushed me, and that at this moment I am writhing beneath your cutting sarcasms ; but never were you more mistaken : I will push my fortunes, in spite of all your hostility ; and hope to see the day when you will be as ready to court my acquaintance as I am now to remove myself from your presence."

To these braggadocio remarks, Uncle Oliver did not condescend to reply, but calmly quitted the room ; while late that same evening, Peregrine Bunce started by the Warwick mail for London. It was clear he was not " settled " yet !

## CHAPTER XXVI.

IT was about two months after the events referred to in the last chapter, that Peregrine Bunce, as he was walking one evening down that fine avenue of trees in the Regent's Park that leads to the Zoological Gardens, came suddenly on an individual who was seated alone on one of the benches ; and who, as he passed, rose from his seat and accosted him, when he instantly recognized Mr. Slobberton Mawks, whom he had last seen at Leamington, where he figured as Mr. Sandford Montclaire at the exhibition of Animal Magnetism.

"Ah, Mr. Mawks—Montclaire, I mean," said Peregrine, taking a seat beside him, "I am happy to see you again ; and pray, what has brought you into this part of the world ?"

"My name is neither Mawks nor Montclaire," replied the ex-curate of Twigglesford.

"Indeed ! Have you got another *alias* then ?" inquired Bunce, smiling.

"I now go by the name of Ezekiel Holdfast," said Mawks, with an assumption of gravity.

"A very pretty name !" observed Peregrine, "and one that just suits your complexion, and the serious cut of your phiz. But what brings you to town ? I thought you were travelling with the magnetic professor, M. Le Fou."

"Oh, no, I have left him nearly six weeks since."

"Why so ? Any awkward dispute about salary, or growing dislike to be made a pincushion of ?"

"These were certainly among my chief objections to any further connection with Le Fou," replied Mawks. "The truth is, that at one of the Mesmeric exhibitions at Gloucester, whither, you remember, I was going when we last parted, the company who witnessed the experiments were so eager to ascertain whether I was really and truly dead to all feeling while entranced, that one of them, after running a corking-pin right through my cheek, and finding me apparently insensible to pain —though I could have broken the fellow's head for his officiousness—actually proposed to cut a notch in my nose with his penknife ! You may laugh, Mr. Bunce, but it was no laughing matter to me ; for the wretch would certainly have made my

nose the victim of his scepticism, had I not jumped up in a passion, and sent him spinning under the table with a blow of my doubled fist, to the great confusion of the professor, the astonishment of the company, and the destruction of all my prospects in the Mesmeric line of business. However, I do not regret it much, for a shilling a pin is but poor pay ; and even when on one occasion an arrant disbeliever in the science hammered a tenpenny nail up to the head between my jaws until it stuck fast in my tongue, the professor only gave me a fourpenny piece extra ! ”

“ Monstrous ! And so you cut the connection ? ”

“ Just so.”

“ And what have you been doing with yourself since ? ”

“ Why, after mature consideration, I thought it best to turn patriot again, so went down to the manufacturing districts, where I gave a series of anti-cornlaw lectures, and inveighed fiercely against the fiendish selfishness of the landholders, who snatched the bread out of the hands of the poor operative, and forced him to put up with potatoes instead. But I found that though people were very willing to hear me, and highly praised my eloquence, they were very unwilling to pay the orator. To be sure, they gave me one or two small dinners ; and Mr. Cobden flattered me by the assurance that my splendid abilities, aided by my sound principles, would one day or other immortalize me ; but I found it all moonshine ; and when I delicately hinted at a subscription, some of the leading anti-cornlaw agitators told me that they made it a point of conscience never to subscribe for a patriot, for it was establishing a dangerous precedent, and lowering the dignity of his vocation ! But what decided me on quitting this line of business was the following circumstance. Late one night, after presiding at a half-crown anti-cornlaw dinner (gin and pipes included), I was found agitating for the Charter in the streets, and expatiating on the vast pecuniary sacrifices I had made in the godlike cause of free trade ; and the Habeas Corpus Act being instantly suspended in my person, I was carried off between two policemen to the station-house ; and next morning taken before a magistrate, who, being utterly wanting in patriotic sensibility, fined me five shillings for being drunk, and would no doubt have treated Brutus and Cato in the same manner, had they been brought before him under similar circumstances ! Finding myself thus ungratefully rewarded for my struggles in the cause of the people, I packed up all my worldly effects in a red cotton pocket-handkerchief, and started

off to the metropolis, which, after all, is the only proper place for men of talent."

"And what is your vocation now?" inquired Bunee.

"I am an angel," replied Mawks, with solemnity.

"An angel!" exclaimed Bunce, laughing heartily at the idea of a short man with a squint, and a nose that turned up like a fish-hook, presuming to call himself an angel.

"Yes, an angel," repeated Mawks: "a saintly gentleman whom I picked up a short time ago in an Islington omnibus, and who afterwards happened to hear me preach in the streets on the subject of the Millennium, introduced me to an Irvingite who frequents the chapel in Newman Street; and I made such an impression on this excellent individual by my familiar acquaintance with the Unknown Tongues, that he procured me the appointment of one of the seven angels of the chapel in question; so now I stand at the altar on Sundays with a brazen candlestick in my hand, and am supported by a small subscription among the brethren, till I am permitted to officiate as preacher. I must confess, I felt a little foolish at first, when I did duty as an angel with a big brass candlestick stuck between my fingers; but I soon got used to it; besides, were it not so, one must not quarrel with one's bread and butter."

"Certainly not," observed Peregrine, who was fully capable of appreciating the practical wisdom and beauty of this sentiment.]

"And besides," continued Mawks, "I live in hopes; for the methodistical line is a very promising one, and sometimes one can contrive to pick up a rich, devout widow, or old maid. I am told that several wealthy ladies attend the New Jerusalem; and should I get tired of doing duty as a cherub in Newman Street, I think it very likely that I may be tempted to try my fortune among some of these, which at any rate is a more agreeable speculation than having pins thrust into your cheek at a shilling a pin, and fourpence extra for a tenpenny nail!"

"Well, I wish you success in all your speculations, whether angelic or amatory," observed Bunce, "and perhaps one of these days I may look in on you in Newman Street, and see how you acquit yourself with your candlestick. By the bye, to be in perfect costume, you should sport a pair of wings; for an angel is nothing without two wings growing out of his shoulder-blades."

"Oh, we're not particular as regards costume," said Mawks. ¶

"But surely you don't wear the same dress at the altar that you have got on now," exclaimed Peregrine.

"That's just as I please," was the reply.

"Well, I couldn't fancy a cherub in shorts!" said Bunce, laughing, and forthwith proceeded to crack divers dull jokes on the subject; when, having expended all his ammunition, he bade his amiable companion adieu, and resumed his walk towards the garden.

The above conversation, frivolous as it was, made a deep impression on the scheming Peregrine's mind, and induced a serious fit of meditation. He was more particularly struck with Mawks's cursory allusion to those wealthy old maids and widows who were in the habit of frequenting conventicles, and asked himself more than once why he should not try his luck among them, as a serious gentleman of independent fortune. What indeed was to prevent him from again playing the part of "Cœlebs in search of a Wife?" He had had some experience in the methodistical line during his courtship of Margy Minton, and now congratulated himself on it, as he would be able to turn his practical knowledge to account. Besides, he felt that it was absolutely necessary he should get hold of a rich wife; first, because his income—though sufficient for all purposes of rational independence—did not accord with his notions of what Thompson calls "an elegant sufficiency;" secondly, because, having no fixed, steady habits of business, and no trade or profession, matrimony was the only likely speculation he could venture on; and, thirdly—and this was his crowning reason—because he was anxious to show Uncle Oliver that he could do without him, and did not care a brass farthing for his hostility. Actuated by these various motives, Bunce resolved to lose no time, but to set to work at once, and in right earnest.

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## CHAPTER XXVII.

At no great distance from Mecklenburg Square—that bleakest and most inhospitable-looking of squares, in whose road the grass grows all the year round, and where a carriage, or even a pedestrian, is seldom seen—nothing, in fact, but a thick-set servant-maid or two carrying a brace of moon-faced babies in their arms—where no one ever seems either to give, or go out to, parties, and where all is cheerless, solitary, and, as it were, with-

out the pale of metropolitan civilization,—at a short distance from this deserted, melancholy square, whose inhabitants, we should imagine, never cracked a joke in their lives, stands a formal undersized conventicle, where on Sundays and on Wednesday evenings a motley congregation assemble, for the purpose of singing enthusiastic hymns in the key of a Tower-gun and being electrified by the minacious discourse of a preacher, who, like Boatswain Smith, deals largely in sulphur and brimstone, and surpasses even Huntington himself in his supercilious contempt for the niceties of syntax and grammar.

Hither Peregrine, who now lodged in Norfolk Street, wended his way accidentally one Wednesday afternoon, on his road to a friend's in Pentonville. Just as he passed the conventicle, a carriage drove up to the door, from which a lady, dressed in widow's weeds, alighted, and immediately entered the building, at a mincing, demure pace, and with eyes bent humbly on the ground.

Bunce, whose wits were on the alert, thought there would be no harm in following the fair widow; so tucking in his shirt-collar, and smoothing his hair straight over his forehead, he watched her into a pew, of which she was the only tenant, and saw at once by the respect paid her by the pew-opener, that she was regarded as a woman of some consideration. Accordingly, he took up a position as near to her as possible in the aisle, just as though he were looking about for a seat, which, the chapel being pretty full, it was not very easy to find.

After a few minutes of apparent irresolution and timidity, during which he endeavoured to catch the lady's eye, he beckoned to the pew-opener, and, thrusting a shilling into her hand, asked her in a whisper, if he might be permitted to enter the pew, as there was only one person in it, and there seemed to be little or no room elsewhere. The woman, propitiated by his timely douceur, made immediate application to the fair widow; the result of which was that the pew-door was thrown open by the former, and Peregrine invited to enter.

His first step being thus gained, he lost not a moment in improving his opportunity, but put on a face of most imposing sanctity, and joined in the hymn, which was then being sung by the congregation, with exceeding zeal; indeed, he played his part so famously—so infamously would be the fitter term, for as nothing more becomes a man than true, unaffected piety, so nothing is more infamous than the assumption of it, and nothing better deserves exposure—that more than once he detected his

fair neighbour stealing a glance towards him out of the corners of her pious eyes ! and before the service was concluded, she had even gone the length of offering him her hymn-book ; which he accepted with an air, three parts devotion, and one part gallantry.

When the service was over, he made no further attempt—sly dog !—at an acquaintance with the lady, but quitted her with a profound bow at the chapel-door, and immediately afterwards the carriage bore her from his longing eyes, while he slowly retraced his steps to Norfolk Street, blessing the lucky accident that had so unexpectedly thrown in his way a widow, whom he guessed to be as rich as Mrs. Mimminy, and whom he hoped to find ere long equally ready to throw off her weeds, and accept him as her liege lord.

\* On the following Sunday, he again presented himself at the chapel, but this time with a hymn-book of his own ; and among all the numerous congregation there was not one who exhibited more decided indications of piety than the “regenerated” Bunce. Greatly, however, to his disappointment, the lady was not present ; but not wishing to throw away a chance, he waited about a quarter of an hour in the aisle, and then coolly took possession of her pew ; which he had scarcely done, when she made her appearance, dressed as before, with remarkable primness, but looking exceedingly confused, at the idea, no doubt, of being so late. Of course, he made a polite offer to evacuate the premises, but a look convinced him that he was welcome to remain ; and he readily availed himself of the gracious permission. As it was raining hard when they came out of the chapel, he felt that he could not do less than offer her the shelter of his umbrella ; which she accepted with a look of meek and modest thankfulness that elevated the ingenuous young man to the seventh heaven.

No sooner had the carriage driven off, than quick as lightning Peregrine hailed a return cab, and, jumping into it, directed the cabman to follow the vehicle, and keep it carefully in sight. The fellow, who, like most of his fraternity, had an intuitive quickness of perception, winked his eye knowingly, by way of answer, and then scrambling up to his box, applied his whip with such hearty energy to the established raw of his lean, sinewy hack, that he had the greatest possible difficulty in not distancing the carriage, instead of jogging along soberly in the rear.

In due time the coach stopped at a grave, old-fashioned-looking house in Gower Street ; on ascertaining which fact, Peregrine

dismissed the cab, and took an accurate geographical survey of the premises ; and having made himself thoroughly acquainted with the exact longitude and latitude, bearings north and south, &c., of the fair Unknown's mansion, he hurried back to his lodgings with all the self-satisfaction of a good man who has just fulfilled a sacred duty.

His next point was, to find out the widow's name, to which end he diligently consulted the Court Calendar ; but as this gave him no information on which he could rely, the volume happening to be an old one, he called himself at the house on the following Wednesday evening, when—as he rightly guessed—the fair devotee would be at chapel, and inquired for a Mrs. Tomkins ; and being told that no lady of that name lived there, asked in return who did, and was informed by a smart servant-maid that it was Mrs. Colonel Carnaby.

"Mrs. Colonel Carnaby!" said Bunce, lingering on the name with great satisfaction, "good : then she is sure to be respectable, and must have an independent fortune of her own ; for she could not keep a carriage, and an establishment in Gower Street, on her pension as an officer's widow. God grant I may have no rivals in her favour ; but, alas ! nothing is more likely, for these well-jointed dames are soon snapped up. Well, rivals or no rivals, one thing is clear,—namely, that whatever I do, I must do quickly. There must be no shilly-shallying in the business ; it is one thing to court a maid, and another a widow. These last like promptitude and decision in love-matters, and, egad, Mrs. Colonel Carnaby shall find me prompt and decided enough. I'll woo her, and win her, before she well knows what she's about—carry her by storm ere she has the slightest apprehension of a siege."

From this moment Peregrine assiduously cultivated a puritanical length and gravity of phiz, discarded shirt-collars, and would have kept his hair close-cropped, had he not, on taking a peep into the glass, ascertained that it would make him look quite a fright ; and he had shrewdness enough to know that widows—no matter how devout—are seldom in any desperate hurry to fall in love with frights. So he decided on letting his hair remain *in statu quo*, with this only difference, that he discreetly curtailed the flowing luxuriance of his side-curls.

Be sure, it was not long ere he again presented himself at the chapel, and, taking up a position where he could scarcely fail to catch Mrs. Colonel Carnaby's eye, he made a point of distinguishing himself by the strictness of his devotional exercises. Whose

eyes were more scrupulously bent on the minister ? Who sung a hymn through the nose with more unction ? Who sighed more profoundly, from the conviction that he was an awful sinner ? Such a perfect humility was there in his manner, and the subdued expression [of his carefully disciplined countenance, that one or two old ladies in the neighbouring pews already began to take a deep interest in him, and to regard him with scarcely concealed admiration, as a model to all the young men of the day.

At first, Mrs. Carnaby, in whose immediate neighbourhood he always took special care to station himself, accorded him no further favour than she might have accorded to any other pious young man who had politely held an umbrella over her in the rain ; but by degrees his punctual attendance at the chapel began to fix her attention, and, insensibly as it were, to claim her regard. He seemed so moral—so virtuous—se everything that a gentleman should be ! And then his bow, when on one occasion he picked up her hymn-book, which she had dropped on quitting the pew—it was so courteous—so graceful ! Surely he could not be one of those clever, needy fortune-hunters who are always on the look-out for wealthy maids and widows ! No, he must be respectable, for his manners betokened one used to good society, and perfectly at ease on the score of income ; and, satisfied in her own mind as to these two important points, the fair dame no longer hesitated to return the bow with which he invariably saluted her on entering or quitting the chapel ; and at length, despite her exceeding shyness and sensitiveness, she even found courage to say “ Yes,” in reply to his observation one evening that they had heard a charming discourse !

From one word this exemplary couple by some means or other got on to two, and from two to a complete sentence. Thus matters stood, when the chapter of accidents, to which Peregrine had so often vainly trusted, for the first time turned up in his favour, and gave a wonderful lift to his prospects. It happened that one Wednesday evening, Mrs. Colonel Carnaby had left her hymn-book behind her in the pew—no doubt from forgetfulness ; and Bunce having discovered the precious volume, and found her address written fully and distinctly in the title-page, felt that he was bound by all the solemn ties that can bind a gentleman, to return it to her in person ; so called, sent up his card, and was shown by a smirking servant-maid into the drawing-room.

Mrs. Carnaby, who was reclining negligently on a sofa in an attitude which set off her figure to the greatest advantage, appeared at first a little embarrassed and perplexed by his unex-

pected visit; but Peregrine was so very respectful, and talked so much about religion, and so little on sentimental subjects, that her reserve and caution were insensibly lulled to sleep; and when gradually and adroitly he turned the conversation on himself—stated who he was, and what he was, and how blest he was in the affections of a rich and pious uncle, who destined him for his sole heir—there was so much tact and unassumingness in his egotism, that the good-natured lady not only listened to him with forbearance, but even encouraged him with a smile of the most captivating sweetness.

The ice once broken, matters went on swimmingly. The widow evidently did not dislike Bunce, though she maintained a becoming distance; and when with the utmost respect and deference he requested permission to call again, and continue an acquaintance so unexpectedly commenced, she gave him that sort of equivocal reply, which, without conceding a favour asked, does not absolutely refuse it. He had an excellent book, he assured her, written by a pious friend of his, an occasional preacher at Peckham, which he should be most delighted to lend her, as it was exceedingly refreshing to the soul: accordingly, on his next visit, he brought with him a small volume of poems, entitled “Sacred Cooings,” which he had casually picked up at a book-stall in the chaste and polished neighbourhood of the Blackfriars Road.

“One shoulder of mutton,” says the old adage, “drives down another;” and in cases like the present, one visit invariably paves the way for another. Peregrine now made frequent calls in Gower Street; and the more he saw of Mrs. Colonel Carnaby, the more he felt convinced that she was just the sort of woman to make him happy. She was generally alone when he called, which at first rather surprised him, for he had imagined that a rich widow, even though of a devout turn, would have had hosts of congenial acquaintances; but she soon explained this matter to his entire satisfaction: her retired mode of life, she said, was wholly voluntary on her part, for she had given up all society since the death of her lamented Carnaby; many kind friends had endeavoured to turn her back into the world, and the Jobsons of Wimpole Street, and the Dobsons of Cavendish Square, were constantly sending her invitations to their parties; but she refused all solicitations of the sort; the dear colonel’s death had for ever put an end to her taste for gaiety, and her thoughts were now bent, not on this world, but on that which is to come. Her kind and affectionate brother, Captain Allan—

to whom she should be most happy to introduce Mr. Bunce—frequently joked her about her serious turn of mind ; but being himself of a gay and cheerful nature, it was impossible for him to enter into her feelings ; so she was thrown completely on her own resources, and felt in some degree quite an isolated creature ; and as she said this, a pearly tear found its way down her innocent nose, and produced such an effect on the tender heart of Bunce, that, but for the etiquette of the thing, he could have hugged her from pure sympathy !

When he next called, he found, on entering the drawing-room, a gentleman engaged in close confabulation with Mrs. Carnaby. Both rose on his entrance ; and the lady observing that he looked a little surprised and embarrassed, hastened to introduce him to her brother, Captain Allan, whom she had mentioned to him a day or two before, and who had only just returned from a flying visit to some military friends at Windsor. The captain, who was a smart-looking man, with huge whiskers and moustachios, and a thick red hand, about the size of a shoulder of lamb, received Bunce with ready off-hand courtesy, and taking a seat beside him, engaged in instant conversation about the weather, the unusual dullness of the season in town, the state of affairs in China, &c. Finding him a remarkably frank and chatty man, and full of a sort of rough, jovial humour, Peregrine soon felt himself quite at home ; but observing the uneasiness that it occasioned Mrs. Carnaby, he cautiously refrained from laughing at any of his quizzical allusions to her serious turn of mind, and quitted the house with the impression that the captain, though much too open and careless in his manner to be a shrewd man of the world, was at least an excellent fellow, and quite as easy to be managed as his artless and unaffected sister.

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## CHAPTER XXVIII.

“ How do you like this wine, Bunce ? ” exclaimed Captain Allan, as they were sitting together one day after dinner in Gower Street, whither Peregrine had been specially invited by the gallant officer, who, at the desire of Mrs. Carnaby, officiated as host.

“ Capital ! ” was the reply ; “ never tasted better in my life.”

“ It ought to be good ; for it belonged to my late brother-in-

law, who was an admirable judge of wine, and liked to see his friends enjoy themselves. Ah," added the captain with a sigh, "things are strangely altered since his time!"

"Has he been long dead?" inquired Peregrine.

"About a year, I think;—try one of these olives; they're the best Spanish, and as fresh as a daisy."

"His widow seems to take his loss cruelly to heart," observed Bunce.

"Never saw such grief in my life, as when she first heard of his death! Down she went, dead as mutton, on the floor in a fit!—in hysterics every day for a month after—obliged to have her head shaved, and wear a wig for nearly half a year—never been the same woman since."

"Was he a pleasant man in company, Colonel Carnaby?" asked Peregrine.

"Oh, the very life and soul of society!" replied the captain; "told a capital story, was fond of his joke, and sang like an angel. 'Twas a thousand pities his going off in the way he did—such a fine fortune as he had, too!"

"Going off, captain? I don't understand you."

"What, has my sister never told you the particulars of his death?"

"She once, I remember, said something about his dying nobly in his country's cause; but as the subject seemed to affect her, of course I did not press my inquiries," observed Bunce.

"Dying nobly!" replied Captain Allan, who was somewhat fond of exaggerated forms of speech: "sir, the colonel died like a hero! He was a perfect Brutus, sir,—a Brutus every inch of him, by God! Was among the first to mount the walls at Canton, when, just as he was waving the British flag over the bodies of a couple of Chinese officers, whom he had cut down with his broad-sword, he was struck by a random shot, taken prisoner, and two days afterwards hanged by order of Commisioner Lin! Shocking business, wasn't it? To think that so fine a fellow should have been strung up, like a dried haddock, by a set of barbarians who wear pig-tails, and get drunk on opium! I have hated the sight of a pig-tail ever since—but why don't you help yourself? The wine's been standing with you for the last half-hour."

Peregrine filled his glass, and then resumed the conversation on the subject of the deceased colonel, observing, with a view to draw his host out—for he was impressed with a conviction that his communicative temper was the result of his ignorance of the

world—that it was at least a fortunate thing that Mrs. Carnaby had been left in good circumstances; for had it been otherwise, the thoughts of her destitution would have deeply embittered her husband's last moments.

"Why, yes," replied Captain Allan; "she has no cause for complaint on the score of fortune;—a pretty sum in the funds—thriving landed estate in Lincolnshire—to say nothing of some ten or twenty houses in the neighbourhood of the New Road—so far as these can make her happy and comfortable, she has every reason to be so; but her husband's death, sir,—the idea of his having been hanged, not by a Christian Jack Ketch, in a decent and orderly manner, but by a damned pig-tailed Pagan—this is what she can't reconcile herself to—the shock has been terrible, and has gradually brought on that serious turn of mind which you now observe in her. In many women at her age this excessive seriousness would be mere affectation; but she is all sincerity, which quite redeems her in my eyes, for I detest your canting hypocrites. No offence, Bunce; for though I understand you're somewhat devoutly disposed yourself, yet I can read in your countenance that yours, like my sister's, is the devotion of the heart; and dammee, sir, I love a good Christian as well as any man."

"And is there no chance, think you, of Mrs. Carnaby's marrying again? So amiable, wealthy, and, I may add, personable a lady cannot be without admirers," exclaimed Peregrine, in what he thought his most artful and insinuating manner.

"Why, I don't know what to say about that," replied the captain; "but this I do know, that she'll never consent to fix her affections on any one whom she has reason to believe looks rather to her fortune than herself. Being all disinterestedness herself, she expects to find the same virtue in others; and no one will ever create an interest in her heart who shows too much worldly solicitude regarding her property. She can't bear to have it thought that she is respected only for her money, and on this point is more quick-witted than you would suppose. And a fortunate thing she is so; for London abounds in sharpers; and women, situated as she is, cannot be too distrustful."

These observations made a profound impression on Peregrine, who piqued himself on his knowledge of character, and his tact in drawing others out and keeping his own views in the dark. "Now," thought he, "I see how the land lies, and must shape my course accordingly. It will not do, at least before marriage, to talk to Mrs. Carnaby about money matters, and run the chance of

splitting upon settlements. No, no, I must be all disinterestedness—vow and protest I love her for herself alone, and even go the length of furnishing the funds for the honeymoon out of my own pocket. This is a devilish unpleasant business, by the bye; however, there's no help for it; besides, the speculation will repay the outlay tenfold. How lucky I met with this shallow, chattering captain! But for his chance hints—and he little thinks how valuable they are to me!—I should have sailed on a wrong tack, adopted a business-like air of caution, and, as a necessary consequence, have lost the golden prize."

When Peregrine next called on Mrs. Carnaby, he found her chatting with Captain Allan, and a lively, personable young man, whom she addressed familiarly as "George," and who seemed like the gallant officer, to be quite on free-and-easy terms with her.

"Mr. Bunce," she said, as that ingenuous and disinterested youth entered the room, "allow me to introduce to you my cousin, Mr. George Montgomery."

Peregrine replied by a stiff, constrained bow, which he vainly endeavoured to render courteous, while the other acknowledged the introduction merely by a slight nod, accompanied by a look of cool nonchalance.

"George! Cousin!" thought Bunce, as he sat silent in his chair, while the rest of the party ware chatting carelessly on various topics,—"cousins are very frequently dangerous relations, and apt, when circumstances favour them, to strengthen their affinity, and become husband and wife. Egad, I must delay matters here no longer, but come to a decision at once, and strike while the iron is hot, or I may chance to find a formidable rival in this same cousin George."

Accordingly, when Mrs. Carnaby and her young relative had quitted the house, to discuss some family affairs, as the former observed, with her solicitor in Bedford Row, Bunce, who remained behind, took advantage of her absence, to sound—with his usual adroit cunning, as he flattered himself—the frank and communicative Captain Allan, on the subject of Mr. George Montgomery.

"An agreeable young man that, captain," he observed.

"A fine fellow indeed—a very fine fellow," replied Captain Allan, "stands six foot in his shoes, and as broad across the shoulders as a Hercules. A sad dog among the women, though! No standing him—he looks at them, and they're done for!—Drop into his arms like so many ripe plums. If a girl

was as cold as an iceberg, he'd find ways and means to thaw her. Too bad—too bad. Pleasant, but wrong, as I often tell him!"

"His fair cousin seems much attached to him," was Bunce's faltering rejoinder.

"Why, I believe—that is, I may venture to say, she doesn't altogether hate him like poison. To be sure, she would gladly see him a little more serious; but that will come soon enough, you know. Meantime, I'm positive he likes her; and when that's the case, who knows?—however, it's no affair of mine. But halloo, Bunce! what the devil ails you? You look as foolish and perplexed as a calf in a butcher's cart!"

"A mere giddiness, to which I'm subject at times," replied the annoyed Peregrine, anticipating another matrimonial disappointment; and then, under the pretext that the fresh air would revive him, he bade a hurried adieu to the captain, and rushed with the strides of an ogre from the house.

It so happened that on the evening following this explanation, Bunce met Mrs. Carnaby at chapel; and full of what he had lately heard, and well aware that widows should be carried by a *coup de main*, he resolved to accompany her home, and avail himself of the opportunity to come at once to an understanding. The image of "Cousin George," with his broad shoulders and seductive manners, rose like a spectre before him, scaring away everything in the shape of judgment and prudence; and accordingly, after he had sat chatting for some minutes on the sofa beside Mrs. Carnaby, he suddenly found himself on his knees before her, pouring forth protestation after protestation with a fervour and vehemence that put him into an awful state of perspiration, while the mellow evening sun—as a novelist would say—streamed in at the windows, shedding a halo round the head of the sanctified widow, and imparting even to her tortoise-shell comb a splendour that seemed not of earth!

With astonishment bordering on incredulity, Mrs. Carnaby listened to her impassioned lover's protestations; and the more she listened, the more nervous she became. She was so shocked—so wholly overcome—the thought of marriage reminded her so painfully of her poor dear martyred colonel, who with his wonted generosity had settled his all upon her—

"Settled his all!" thought Peregrine. The remark added fuel to the flame that already scorched him. "Dearest idol of my soul!" exclaimed the combustible young man, "deign, oh deign to be mine, and perfect my felicity here and hereafter."

I ask but to possess your heart, and fling all meaner considerations to the winds. What is fortune if unshared by you? What is life itself if uncheered by the magic of your sweet presence? I care not for your wealth—perish the debasing thought! No, I have a competence sufficient for us both—three hundred per annum secured on mortgage in Kent—six thousand three per cents—to say nothing of my expectations at the death of my respected uncle—an infirm old gentleman with a decided liver complaint, an asthma of ten years' standing, and a dropsy for which he has been six times tapped;—all this is yours—deign, then, loveliest of women——”

“Indeed, indeed, Mr. Bunce,” said the widow, interrupting him, but not with indignation, “I must hear no more of this. Consider, sir, my unprotected state—my irreparable loss—Oh, my dearest Carnaby!” and she stopped, and applied a white cambric pocket-handkerchief to her eyes.

“Weep not, beloved one,” exclaimed Bunce, making a sudden tug at her right hand; “I will be a Carnaby, and more than a Carnaby to you. Say, then, but one little word, ‘I love you’—you hesitate, alas! —”

“If my respect be of value, Mr. Bunce, you have that.”

“Respect! Oh, what is mere cold respect compared to the scorching passion that consumes my heart to tinder?”

“Really, sir, this language——”

“Wherefore that frown, my angel? Tell me but that you forgive me—that you do not resent my presumption—Alas! what am I saying? Love has driven me frantic, and the hapless Carnaby’s fate will ere long be mine. He was hanged by Commissioner Lin, and I shall meet this night the same fate, and be buried in the suicide’s grave.”

“You ask my forgiveness, Mr. Bunce,” replied the widow; “you have it, but only on condition that this folly be not repeated;” and she looked on him with a sweet sad smile, that seemed to imply, “Don’t hang yourself for me; for if you do, the mischief would be irreparable!”

Encouraged by the touching sweetness of her smile, the impassioned Peregrine, aware that not a moment was to be lost, and resolved at all hazards to steal a march on the broad-shouldered George, made a second tug at Mrs. Carnaby’s hand; and having this time succeeded in capturing it, he raised it to his enamoured lips, and imprinted on it a thousand kisses; then gently rising, and placing himself again beside the widow on the sofa, his arm—by some mysterious means or other—gradually

stole round her waist, and before she was fully aware of her close proximity, he had hugged her to his heart with the energy of a Norway bear: and not satisfied with the flagrant iniquity of this proceeding, the monster actually pressed his lips to hers, and began kissing away, as though he were kissing for a wager, while the half-stifled lady exclaimed in the intervals of each embrace, “For shame, sir! unhand me—I entreat—I insist—oh goodness gracious! Is this your piety? and after such a discourse as we heard this evening?—There, there he goes again! Oh, I shall faint!—I shall scream!—Let me go—for mercy’s sake let me go!”

But the more Mrs. Carnaby cried “let me go!” the closer Bunce stuck; and at length, after a world of coaxings and entreatings, and supplicatings, and threats that, if she rejected him, he would hang himself to the lamp-post at her door, he wrung from her, first, a confession that she was not altogether indifferent to his merits; and next—by dint of another hug and another series of labial salutes—a promise that she would be his!

Happy Bunce! Now doth he stand a fair chance of being “settled at last!” What an opportunity of triumphing over his uncle, with his squeamish notions of honour and generosity! How delightful, too, to be enabled to show off before the Mistys, and the Towseys, and the Mintons, and the Mimminys, and the Dumbledores, and the Nobbatops, and the M’Larrups, &c. &c.—to set their scandal at defiance—to hold his head above them all—to parade his wealth under their very nose—to be happy and flourishing, in spite of them! No more shuddering with apprehension at the sound of M’Larrup’s key-bugle! No more cringing and succumbing to Uncle Noll’s caprices! All this was past for ever; but, as even in the midst of his triumph, the thought flashed across his mind that there was “many a slip ‘twixt the cup and the lip,” Bunce determined to hurry forward the match; for his eagerness to parade his independence far outran his worldly prudence, and he was quite as much actuated by vindictiveness as by avarice.

And here it may be fitting, perhaps, that we give a slight sketch of the susceptible widow. She was Peregrine’s senior, but not much; her face was good, her figure faultless; keenness and intelligence sparkled in her small black eyes; and, in fact, she was altogether a very presentable person, with one only drawback—namely, that at the tip of her nose there was at times a faint red bloom, which—as a satirist would have said—afforded

a proof that the feature in question was not fed upon water!

Having once passed the Rubicon, Peregrine determined to “progress”—as Jonathan would say—at a giant’s pace. Short as was his acquaintance with the lady, he felt certain that he was as well read in her character as if he had known her an age, and that she was just the sort of person to suit him—affectionate, yielding, courteous, prudent, and, what he valued more than all, lavishly endowed with the Mammon of unrighteousness.

Satisfied in his own mind as to all these points, he decided on instant despatch, and on his very next visit pressed the fair widow to fix the happy day: he was met, however, by a variety of delicate scruples, which rose in exact proportion to his ardour, and indeed served to act as a stimulus to it; but, at length wearied out with his importunities, the lady abandoned her objections, and consented within the week to make him the most fortunate of men.

The happy day arrived—that day which was to put an end to all Peregrine’s apprehensions respecting “Cousin George,” to set him above the world, and enable him to snap his fingers at old Oliver Bunce! Anxious, for once in his life, to act handsomely—for, situated as he now was, he saw that generosity would be the best policy—he carefully avoided any allusion to settlements, professed a lofty indifference to all pecuniary considerations, and scraped together all the ready money he could procure, for the purpose of defraying, with becoming spirit, the expenses of the honeymoon. The wedding breakfast was, of course, furnished by Captain Allan, who was to give away the bride; and a fair young friend of his, who was also connected with Mrs. Carnaby by marriage, was to officiate as bridesmaid. These were to be the only individuals present at the marriage: even “Cousin George” was to be kept in ignorance of the event; for, as the captain intimated, his feelings might possibly overcome him, when he found that the prize he coveted was for ever snatched from his grasp. Besides, the bride had been so long used to a retired mode of life, that her delicate sensibilities would be wounded by any parade or ostentation in an affair which—however voluntary on her part—could scarcely fail to recall vividly and painfully to her mind the lamented victim of Commissioner Lin.

Early on the marriage morn, the enraptured Peregrine presented himself at the mansion of his beloved, whence he was speedily transferred, together with the rest of the party, in a

carriage, whose post-horses were all over white favours, to the church ; and when the ceremony was completed, he returned to Gower Street, there to revel in a breakfast whose various tempting items might create an appetite “ under the ribs of death ; ” and ample justice having been done to this repast, the bride and bridegroom bade farewell to Captain Allan, who threatened them with a visit in a week or two ; and bowled off to Hastings, where it was decided that the honeymoon should be spent. And so, after his numerous unexpected disappointments, Peregrine Bunce was “ settled at last ! ”

Next day, the following paragraph, specially paid for by the exulting bridegroom, and intended evidently to catch the eye of his uncle, and the Mistys, Nobbatops, &c., appeared in most of the morning and evening papers :—“ Married yesterday, at St. Olave’s, Hart-street, Bloomsbury, by the Rev. Phineas Fingerfar, Peregrine Bunce, Esq., to Mrs. Angela Seraphina Carnaby, relict of the late lamented Colonel Carnaby, who, it may be remembered, was among the foremost to scale the walls of Canton ; but being unfortunately taken prisoner, while fighting bravely at the head of his troops, the gallant officer was hanged by order of Commissioner Lin. After the ceremony the happy couple set off in a travelling carriage-and-four for Hastings, where it is supposed they will pass the honeymoon. We understand that the bride is enormously rich, and intends, on her return to town, to give a series of splendid entertainments to the *élite* of the *beau monde*. ”

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## CHAPTER XXIX.

“ SHALL we take a walk on the heights, dearest, this morning ? ” said Peregrine to his wife, as they sat together in their lodgings in Wellington Square, about a fortnight after their marriage ; “ it is just the sort of day for a quiet stroll.”

“ As you please, love,” was the reply of the devoted Mrs. Bunce, “ but, remember, we must not be out long ; for you know my brother, Captain Allan, is to be with us to-day ; and from what he said in his letter, I think we may expect him within the hour.”

“ Oh, true, I forgot ; well, we’ll just go up the hill behind us,

and so on in the direction of the Lovers' Seat"—and here Peregrine smiled with inexpressible archness and sweetness at his wife—"and by the time we return, I dare say the captain will have arrived."

So they went out for their walk, simpering and saying the tenderest things to each other as they strolled on; the husband protesting that he never was so happy in his life, and the wife replying that if aught could reconcile her to the death of a Carnaby, it was the affectionate endearments of a Bunce.

On their return they found, as they had anticipated, the captain fast anchored in the drawing-room. Peregrine gave him a cordial welcome, and his wife—tender-hearted soul!—flung her fond arms round his neck, and kissed him with a sisterly fervour that it was quite delightful to behold.

"Pretty place this," said the gallant officer, "never saw one I liked better—prefer it to Brighton—more snug and sociable—Fish cheap, hey?"

"Yes, I believe so," replied Peregrine.

"I'm fond of fish—of course you've got some to-day—a dinner without fish, especially at a watering-place, is no dinner at all, but merely a lame apology for one."

"Very true," said Peregrine, "but we've been thinking of other things besides fish—haven't we, love?"

"Yes, dearest," replied his wife.

"Oh, ay—I understand—loves and doves—flames and darts—Cupid, and Hymen, and Venus, and all that sort of thing—Well, it's quite natural—Barley-sugar will be barley-sugar, and a honeymoon will be a honeymoon. And now, how are we to pass the day? Can't sit here looking at each other till six o'clock. Suppose we take a ramble towards St. Leonard's—Showy place, I'm told—quite a Brighton."

To St. Leonard's accordingly they went, and spent some time in strolling up and down its streets, and in and out of its libraries, &c., admiring at every turn the exquisite Cockneyism of its buildings, and the trim dandyism of its groves and shrubberies; and having sufficiently gratified their curiosity, they returned to their lodgings just as the servant was laying the cloth for dinner.

The repast was an ample, even a luxurious one; and it is gratifying to be enabled to state that all parties did it justice. Mrs. Angela Seraphina Bunce's appetite, in particular, was in the finest possible condition; and whether it was that marriage had taken off the edge of her shyness and feminine delicacy, or that, as her grief for Carnaby wore off, her natural buoyancy and

even conviviality of temperament came out in blossom ;—whatever might have been the cause, certain it is that she indulged in a world of free and playful jocularity with the captain, and tossed off her wine with a heartiness that set the tip of her nose quite in a glow.

Peregrine, who had never yet seen her so animated, or her nose so crimsoned, was astonished at this new development of character ; but attributing her gaiety to her delight at the visit of her brother, he took no notice of it, though a strange sort of misgiving came over him, for which he could not account, and which he did his utmost to repress.

When the lady had left the room, Captain Allan, with a cool nonchalance that showed how resolved he was to make himself perfectly at home, rang the bell, and ordered up more wine. “By the bye, Bunce,” said he, “this port is not so good as it might be : you must positively lay in some better to-morrow ; and while you’re about it, order in a little Burgundy,—I suppose it is to be had here, and of fine quality, if you give the proper price for it.”

“ It is scarcely worth while,” replied Peregrine, wincing at this proposal, “ for we shall return within the fortnight to Gower Street.”

“ Within the fortnight ! ” repeated Allan with apparent astonishment ; “ why, your wife told me she would not think of stirring for these three months ! ”

“ But it is a matter of absolute necessity that we should leave Hastings at the end of next week. In the first place, there are our marriage-settlements to arrange, and Angela’s fortune to look into—”

“ Oh, damn the settlements,” replied the captain, in his heartiest and frankest manner ; “ never think of business in the honeymoon—plenty of time for that—pass the bottle. By the bye, my good fellow, talking of business, since you *will* put such things into my head, could you oblige me with fifty pounds for a month or two ? I would ask my sister, who I know would accommodate me in an instant ; but the truth is, she, like myself, is somewhat pressed for the ready just now, having had to discharge some heavy debts incurred by the colonel previous to his departure for China.”

“ Heavy debts ! ” exclaimed Bunce, with a visible dropping of the nether jaw ; “ why, I understood from you that Colonel Carnaby, so far from dying in debt, had left his widow a large unencumbered property.”

The amiable captain looked a little embarrassed as he replied, "True, I did say so, and such is the fact; but it so happens that certain unexpected demands have been made on my sister by her first husband's creditors within the last six months, that have drained her for a time of all her spare cash. However, she will soon recover herself, and till then," added Allan, with inimitable *sang froid*, "you of course will supply the needful, and help us to carry on the war. You see I am perfectly frank and straightforward with you; for there should be no secrets between friends."

"Devilish frank, indeed!" thought Bunce; then addressing his brother-in-law, he went on to say, "Well, but respecting these settlements, captain, I really think it's high time something definite should be done on the subject. As your sister's husband, I am entitled to be made acquainted with the exact state of her circumstances."

"And so you shall; but there's time enough for that: Mrs. B. is the most generous of women, and when once she enters upon business, you'll find she'll surprise you by the liberality of her conduct. Leave all to me, and I'll take care that everything shall be settled to your satisfaction. And now with regard to this fifty pound —"

"I'm sorry, Captain Allan, that just now it's out of my power to accommodate you; but I'll tell you what I'll do, I'll speak to my wife on the subject; notwithstanding her want of ready money, she must have abundant means of raising it, and surely she will not hesitate to make a slight sacrifice when it is to benefit a beloved brother! But, perhaps, as you are kind enough to promise that you will see everything settled to my satisfaction, you will apply to her yourself for the fifty pounds, and so arrange both matters at the same time."

"That would be the surest way," replied Allan; "only the devil of it is, that my want is pressing, and my sister can do nothing till she returns to town, and sees her solicitor, who is just now with his family at Cheltenham;" and, making a strong effort to conceal his chagrin, he added, "Well, if you can't oblige me, you can't, and I must rub on as well as I can without the cash."

The servant here entered with a summons to the tea-table; and Bunce, who was anxious to have half an hour's uninterrupted meditation, just waited to despatch a cup of coffee, and then went out, as he said, for a short solitary stroll, leaving his wife and the captain, who showed no disposition

to join him, to amuse themselves with a game at back-gammon.

He took the direction of the sea-shore ; and as he strolled up and down the long narrow strip of sand between the shingle and the water's edge, he occupied himself with coolly and deliberately weighing the *pros* and *cons* of his situation. Here he found much to perplex, and even alarm him. The evident shyness of his wife and the captain on the subject of the former's income ; their dislike to return to Gower Street ; the cool effrontery of the brother ; and the sudden subsiding of all religious zeal on the part of the sister ; to say nothing of her newly-discovered jollity of temperament, and the increased inflammation of her nose ;—these various circumstances, which, separately considered, were perhaps of no great moment, yet taken collectively, afforded, in Bunce's opinion, serious ground for apprehension ; and, his distrust being once roused, he resolved to lose no time in coming to a definite explanation with his wife.

Accordingly, on her retiring to her chamber for the night, he opened at once upon the subject. “I have been thinking, dearest,” he said, “that it is high time we should enter into some explanations respecting our joint pecuniary circumstances ; for should—which God forbid!—any unforeseen calamity befall either of us, think what a painful reflection it would be for the survivor.”

“Mr. Bunce,” replied the lady, interrupting him somewhat cavalierly, “I am surprised—grieved—not to say, shocked—at the want of confidence implied in your remark. Do you distrust me, sir? Do you think me other than I avow myself to be? I have shown no such petty distrust of you ; why, then, should you insult me?”

“Insult you, my dear! Nothing was further from my intention. I only thought——”

“I don't care what you thought, sir ; I only know that my lamented Carnaby, who was the very soul of generosity, would have cut his right hand off sooner than have said what you have just said—at such an early period, too, when we have been married little more than a fortnight! I am positively ashamed of you, Mr. Bunce.”

“Well, don't be angry, my love ; I'll wait your own time for explanation, since you will have it so ; nevertheless, I must say——”

“Say nothing, sir, but what it is fitting for me to hear—I

can't bear contradiction—I'm not used to it—and I won't submit to it ; " and with these words, she put a peremptory close to the conversation for the night.

His vision of perfect happiness and unclouded prosperity thus dimmed, a thousand circumstances occurred to convince Bunce that his wedded life was far from likely to be an enviable one. In the first place, his wife and her brother treated him just as if he were a cypher, and compelled him to live at a much more extravagant rate than he had calculated on ; then, whenever he proposed to return to Gower Street, he was met by a hundred trivial objections, which served greatly to perplex him ; and he had the additional satisfaction of finding his wife's nose daily deeper in its roseate tints, till at length he was secretly forced to admit that, whatever other virtues she might possess, teetotalism was certainly not one of them.

Unhappy Peregrine ! How often he cursed his want of prudence in having rushed into a matrimonial speculation without having previously ascertained its advantages ! Day by day his doubts of his wife's character and fortune became more serious. She was evidently a bit of a vixen, and had been playing the part of a devotee for no other purpose, he feared, than to entrap some unwary gentleman into marriage ; and if so, what became of her statements respecting her wealth ? Yet how could he justly blame her for pursuing the very same line of conduct that he himself had pursued, and angling for a husband with a show of Methodism, when he had angled for a wife with precisely the same specious bait ? Hard as was his lot, he richly deserved it ; but this was so far from consoling him, that it greatly added to his tribulation.

To increase, if possible, his afflictions, his wife was constantly dunning him for money, and he was not often in the mood to give it. As his hopes of obtaining wealth through her means diminished, his love of thrift increased ; he became sullen—stingy—anti-connubial in his tastes, and took a special dislike to Captain Allan, whose bearing towards Mrs. Bunce was anything but that of a brother towards a sister.

One evening, as he stood absorbed in thought at his drawing-room window, his attention was suddenly attracted to the sound of angry voices in the street ; and looking in the direction whence the noise proceeded, he saw his wife and Captain Allan engaged in altercation with a stranger, who seemed quite beside himself with rage, and, as they moved on, kept close beside them, till he had ascertained their address, when Bunce heard him quit

them with a threat that he would see them again on the morrow.

"Who is this person that threatens you with a visit, Mrs. Bunce?" inquired Peregrine, peevishly, as she and the captain entered the drawing-room; "is it another brother, or another cousin George?"

"You're a brute!" was the gentle reply.

"Mr. Bunce," said the captain, not wishing to push matters to extremities, "you must be aware that my sister, encumbered as she has been by her late husband's debts—though, as I told you before, she will very soon recover herself—must occasionally have been hard-pressed for money; and the consequence of this is, that while, like a dutiful wife, she has been clearing off the Colonel's scores, she has been incurring obligations herself; and it is one of her creditors that has just now been besetting her with his importunities. I need not entreat you to satisfy the fellow's demands, for I take for granted you have too much respect for Mrs. B., to allow her feelings to be outraged by his persecution."

This explanation was as a dagger struck into the heart of Bunce. In his hurry to secure a rich wife—as he imagined his Angela Seraphina to be—he had never dreamed for an instant that she might possibly be encumbered with debts; and now for the first time he woke to a sad conviction of the alarming truth! It was clear she had married him as he had married her—for the most selfish purposes; but, despite his shrewdness, she had proved the shrewder of the two: her Methodism had been more than a match for his Methodism; just as Captain Allan's frankness had got to the blind side of his worldly cunning.

Stung to the quick by his brother-in-law's explanation, Peregrine flatly refused to pay a single one of his wife's debts. "Let her sell her first husband's property," he said; "for, according to all accounts, it will more than answer the demands of her creditors."

"Oh, you wretch!" replied the exasperated lady, "to remind me so heartlessly of that dear, good man. Would to God he were alive again!"

"I wish to God he were, and that you were with him!" exclaimed Bunce with a devilish sneer.

"Mr. Bunce," said the captain, "this conduct of yours is exceedingly puerile. As that lady's husband, you must know that you are legally liable for her debts; so take my advice, sink your feelings, draw your purse-strings, and settle matters coolly

and comfortably like a gentleman and a Christian. I grant you, these things are a little unpleasant at first, but they're nothing when you're used to them ;" and as he said this, the gallant officer walked leisurely towards the window, and began humming a few bars of that polished ditty " Jim Crow."

Peregrine made no answer—how should he?—to these remarks; the truth startled him like a thunder-clap, and, snatching up his hat, he darted from the house, with the desperate speed of an epic poet flying from the bull-dog grasp of a bailiff.

It so happened that the very first person he encountered on turning the corner of Wellington Square, on his usual road to the sands, was the creditor whom he had seen but half an hour before in angry expostulation with his beloved. Made desperate by his circumstances, Bunce resolved at all hazards to accost the man, and, explaining who he was, asked him if he could furnish him with any information respecting his wife and her brother.

The fellow stared—as well he might—at such an unusual and even ridiculous request, and after recovering from his surprise, he gave a very significant " Humph ! " and said, " If you really be the husband of the woman as called herself Carnaby, I fear, sir, you've married a queer 'un. Leastways, I've reason to know that she's no great things, and that he as passes for her brother is no more a brother than I am."

" Good God ! can this be possible ? " exclaimed Bunce, with a shudder.

" Fact ! "

" Then why did you trust her if you knew that she was such a doubtful character ? "

" Because I had no suspicion of the sort, when she first got into my books. She lived so quietly, and kept such a genteel establishment in Gower Street, to say nothing of her sporting a carriage and attending chapel, that she fairly got to the blind side of me. However, when I found that she paid none of her tradesmen, but kept putting them off from time to time, first, on the plea that her late husband's affairs were not yet quite settled ; and then, when this excuse grew stale, by telling them that she was about to be married again to a gentleman of large landed property ;—when I found her going on in this queer manner, I thought it high time to make inquiries ; and me and her baker, assisted by the servants, soon managed to discover that the whole concern was a regular do ; that her house was a ready-furnished one ; that she herself had been lady's-maid to

a wealthy dowager of a serious turn of mind, at the West End ; and that the chap as she calls a captain was nothing more than a marker at a billiard-table. We should have brought 'em both to book before this ; only just as we were preparing for a regular blow-up, out came an account of her marriage in the newspapers with a rich gentleman named Bunce—that's you, sir : so thinking we had now a chance of payment, we thought it best to be quiet for a bit, though I nearly split my sides when I came to the part about the walls of Canton and Commissioner Lin. Ha ! ha ! ha ! a rum go that 'ere !—excuse my laughing, sir !—But it's so uncommon droll !—Ha ! ha ! ha !”

“Very funny, indeed !” said Bunce, with intense viciousness of manner.

“Yes, it was that queer paragraph about Commissioner Lin as confirmed all our suspicions ; for we soon ascertained that no Colonel Carnaby had ever been hanged in such an outlandish manner, and that none of that name had ever figured in the Chinese war. She must have been a great fool to have published such a paragraph—don't you think she must, sir, hey ?”

Unfortunate Peregrine ! It was *his* preposterous vanity that had occasioned the publication of the paragraph in question, and it now reacted on him with a vengeance. What between his petty cunning and his egregious self-conceit he had made a precious mess of it !

“Well,” continued the stranger—who by the bye was a grocer in Tottenham-court Road, and answered to the romantic appellation of Snobbs—“now that you know what I am come down about, for I made sure of finding you here, in course, sir, you'll not object to settle my little account. It's been owing a long time—and business is not what it used to be. Can't think of returning to town without it—ailing wife and large family—lots of bad debts—and a heavy bill to make up next Saturday. Shall I call to-morrow, sir ?”

“And you're perfectly satisfied of the truth of your discoveries respecting these people ?” inquired Bunce.

“Perfectly ; for we never rested till one way or other we had found out all about them. But touching my little account ; shall I call to-morrow, sir ?”

“Yes !” was Peregrine's stern rejoinder, and in an instant he had rushed back to his lodgings.

“I feel for the poor gentleman,” exclaimed Snobbs, staring compassionately after him. “God knows, I feel for him ; for I've a good heart, as Mrs. S. often tells me—nevertheless business is

business ; and I must look sharp after him, or, may-be, there'll be a bolt."

Arrived at his lodgings, Peregrine rushed upstairs into the drawing-room, in a state bordering on distraction. His eyes were blood-shot ; his white lips worked strangely ; his mouth was covered with foam ! His wife and the captain started up as he came in, wondering what could have caused such sudden, such overwhelming passion ; for they had not the slightest notion that the shrewd Snobbs had contrived to make himself acquainted with their real characters, and thought he knew no more about them than they had chosen to give out to him as well as to their other creditors.

"Wretches ! miscreants !" exclaimed Bunce, in a tone of voice approaching to a scream. "I have found you out at length, for all your swindling manœuvres ! So, you are this woman's brother, hey? you scoundrelly billiard-marker ! A captain in the army too—Not a word—not a word—or by the living God, I'll strangle you where you stand !" and with a yell like that of a wild beast, the frantic dupe hurled himself full on the cowed swindler, caught him by the throat with a tiger-like grasp, shook him, till every nerve in his body quivered with agitation, and then dashed him on the ground, where he lay completely stunned.

"And you, woman," continued Bunce, turning his livid countenance full on his wife, who, notwithstanding her natural effrontery, trembled like an aspen leaf, at the appalling energy of his passion ; "you—you, I say—are, it seems, the sister of this wretch here ! you, who are his unblushing mistress, and, no doubt, the chief prompter of his fraud ! What, would nothing serve your turn but the widow of a colonel ?—And such a colonel, too !—so brave, so generous, so rich—who left you in such excellent circumstances, and enabled you to marry the man of your heart—the deceived, insulted, dishonoured Peregrine Bunce !" This was said with the bitterest irony ; but instantly resuming his former ferocity of manner, the maddened speaker continued, "Cursed be the brain that hatched such an infernal plot—blistered the tongue that gave it utterance ! You start—you tremble, woman !—Oh that my curse could indeed kill !—Ay, weep, hypocrite ; but will your tears, or the tears of a thousand such, restore my tarnished honour ? O God, I shall go mad !" and the wretched man struck his forehead with his clenched fists, and staggered into a chair near him, while his astonished and panic-stricken wife looked vacantly on, scarce daring even to stir.

Well might she be terrified ; for Bunce's storm of passion was indeed a terrible spectacle to witness. Like most men who hold their tempers under habitual strict control, his fury, when it did break forth, bore down all before it ; the guards and fences set up by prudence were no longer of the slightest avail ; the destructive cataract swept thundering on, irresistible till its power was wholly spent.

"Woman!" he exclaimed, again starting up, and confronting his wife, who made one or two feeble efforts to pacify him, "you know not the havoc you have wrought here"—pressing his hand to his throbbing temples :—"the depth of degradation into which you have plunged your best dupe. Fortune wholly gone—character—respectability—nay, hope itself annihilated—what is there left worth living for? Shall I consent to be the world's laughing-stock—to be taunted—pointed at as the husband of a —? Damnation, the thought is torture!"

As he thus spoke, his red eye glared with ferocious malignity on the trembling creature who had sunk half-fainting on the sofa ; and then fell—accidentally, it is to be presumed—on a sharp steel knife that was lying in a dessert-plate on the table. The moment was a critical one for the infuriated Peregrine. The fiend was at work within him. He made a move towards the instrument, as if fascinated by its ominous glitter ; a wild expression stole over his ghastly countenance ; he cast a startled look behind him, as if he expected to see a demon grinning over his shoulder ; and then abruptly fled from the scene of temptation, as though in flight lay his only chance of avoiding the crime of murder.

That same night, the Hastings mail-coach conveyed the desperate, broken-spirited fortune-hunter to London ; and just four months afterwards, he figured conspicuously in the Insolvent Debtors Court, having been caught lurking in the neighbourhood of his old lodgings, by the keen, suspicious Mr. Snobbs, who had long been on the look-out for him, and who, giving the alarm to the other creditors of his wife, they all pounced on him like so many harpies, and left him with nothing but the clothes on his back, and the consolation of knowing that he possessed, in the person of Mrs. Angela Seraphina Bunce, a blessing of which no law could deprive him. The last time he was heard of he was on his way to one of the new Australian colonies, having been generously offered, by an old acquaintance, who was on the list of directors, and who took pity at his distress, six hundred acres "of the richest arable land," as his friend assured him ; but

which unluckily laboured under these two drawbacks—namely, that one half was bog, and the other half sand ! It is supposed by those who knew him best, that, undeterred by his past misfortunes, he will still continue, like Cœlebs, his search for a wife ; and if luck do not desert him, become the unfortunate husband of some rich Australian squaw, bearing the closest possible resemblance to a kangaroo.

Of the remaining personages of our story little needs be said. Captain Allan, after indulging with impunity in divers ingenious but illegal experiments, was one evening detected in Palace-yard with his hand in the coat-pocket of a fat Whig bishop ; and was in consequence urgently recommended by a magistrate to get his hair close-cropped, and try the air of Brixton for three months ; which, coming to the ears of his sister, Mrs. Colonel Carnaby—alias Bunce—her gentle nature was so much shocked at the thoughts of his “ trouble,” that, in the excess of her tribulation, she applied so vigorously to the refreshment of strong waters, as to tumble into the Regent’s Canal, whence she was fished up a fortnight afterwards in a state of such grievous decomposition as greatly to perplex the sagacity of the unrivalled Mr. Coroner Wakley.

Oliver Bunce still lives and thrives. Of late he has taken up his residence wholly at Twigglesford, in the immediate neighbourhood of the Mintons, with whom he has become a prodigious favourite. Here he passes his time in cracking jokes and laughing at them ; though we regret to state that his jokes do not brighten as he grows older. His favourite story is that of the Bath chambermaid, which he tells after dinner, when the ladies have retired, to his young bachelor friends, and points with so many sly winks and pokes in the ribs of his next neighbour, that he never fails to create a roar of laughter.

Colonel Cactus goes prosing on worse than ever, and even now has not ceased to wonder at the extraordinary circumstance of his having been knocked down by a lady ! After maturely weighing the matter in all its bearings, he has at last come to the conclusion that he was floored, not from accident, but out of pure fun, though he solemnly protests he never could see the drollery of the joke, and, it is to be feared, will go to his grave unenlightened on this point.

Betsy Misty—lively, laughing, generous romp—is married to a round-faced Leamington squire, who, like herself, is always on the broad grin. The MacLarrups and the Towseys are constant visitors at her house, and a more deservedly happy and pros-

perous trio an English sun never yet shone on. May their shadows never be less!

So ends our narrative; and the moral to be deduced from it is this—that cunning and trickery, however plausible and adroit, are, in the long run, no match for open, straightforward integrity; but, in nine cases out of ten, defeat their own ends, and conduce to the utter ruin of the fool who has recourse to them as the instruments of his success in life!

THE END.

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